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The Last of the Arawaks





"ARTHUR SPRANG FORWARD."

The Last of the Arawaks

A Story of Adventure on the Island of San Domingo

BY

FREDERICK A. OBER

AUTHOR OF "CAMPS IN THE CARIBBEES," "CRUSOE'S ISLAND," ETC.

With Illustrations by William F. Stecher



BOSTON AND CHICAGO

W. A. WILDE COMPANY

1901

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THE LAST OF THE ARAWAKS.

Preface.

In selecting the island of Santo Domingo as the scene of the adventures described in the following pages, the writer had in mind many things besides the adventures and the adventurers themselves. He determined to locate his heroes on this island, which of itself was intrinsically interesting; and surely there is no other surpassing, perhaps even equalling, in importance to Americans that of Santo Domingo.

Nearly twenty-five years ago, when he himself was a boy in years and perhaps in indiscretion, the writer went to the West Indies in search of birds for scientific purposes. There he passed two of the happiest years of his life in the woods and mountain wilds, and that his time was not actually wasted, the discovery of more than twenty species of new birds attests. The memory of those years, with its recollection of strange scenes, its suggestions of dense forests, silver-sanded beaches, thick-set jungles, semi-savage peoples, and ferocious animals, comes to him now as the richest experience of his life. Nearly a quarter-century has slid by into the past since this eventful chapter in his life was opened; but youth is perennial if one can but keep with him the memory of days spent close to Nature's heart, and

in the adventures of the two boys herewith given the writer lives over again the days that are gone.

As he has been over almost every acre of the ground described, has followed Columbus from his initial landing-place in the New World throughout his devious wanderings in this hemisphere, and has voyaged repeatedly to the West Indies, first as a naturalist, and later in an official capacity sent by his Government in search of historical information to be utilized at the great Columbian Exposition, he knew the locale of their happenings thoroughly, and when their crude story fell into his hands felt that he ought to be able to shape it so as to be interesting.

Whether he has failed or not, — and that is a matter to be decided by every reader personally, — he feels constrained to add, in explanation (but not in extenuation), that through it all he has been true to his ideals. He believes that mere happenings of themselves are in a measure worthless without a basis of truth and history. He has tried to interweave historical facts with the tale of adventure so closely that his readers will be compelled to heed them; to inculcate something of value which may remain after the story is read and thrown aside.

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The Last of the Arawaks.

I.

One Hundred to One.

AT the mouth of the river Ozama, in the island of Santo Domingo, stands the oldest castle in America.

And not only is it old, but it has a most romantic history; for tradition relates that it was built by none other than the great Christopher Columbus, first European voyager to this continent. If the truth were told, however, it must be admitted that, while it was built by a Columbus, it was not by the immortal Christopher, but by his second son, Don Diego, at one time viceroy and governor of Santo Domingo.

The founding of this quaint old city which bears the same name as the island, Santo Domingo, is attributed to another Columbus, Don Bartholomew, who was known as the Adelantado, while his brother Christopher was given the grandiose title of "Admiral of the Ocean Sea," by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain, in accordance with the "capitula-

tion" entered into with them at Granada, 1492. The history of city and castle are most intimately related, for the latter was built to defend the former, and was its citadel; but not until after Christopher Columbus had been sent back to Spain in chains, accompanied by his great-hearted brother, the Adelantado.

The first settlement in Santo Domingo,—the island, —and consequently the first made by Europeans in America, was on the north coast, and was called Isabella, in honor of the queen of Spain. It was started by Christopher Columbus, in December, 1493, just a year after he had discovered the island on his first voyage.

The present memorials of Isabella consist merely of a few hewn stones, earthen tiles, and shards of pottery, scattered over the ground beneath the trees of a dense forest; for it was found, soon after the first structures were erected there, that the site was insalubrious and unfit for the great city which Columbus had hoped to found in the New World. A church was erected, a "king's house," and several pretentious dwellings, all of stone; but to-day nothing remains of that first city built by Europeans in America, except some fragments of stone and tiles, as already mentioned. Three years after the first house was built, the "city" was already falling into ruin, and the Spaniards were scouring the island for a better site for their commercial capital. This site was found by accident, and the harbor adjacent proved

vastly superior to that of Isabella, which was selected by design.

One of the dissatisfied soldiers strayed away from Isabella — deserted, in fact — and found refuge with a tribe of Indians on the south coast of the island. He fell in love with and married a female "cacique," or chief, of the tribe, and for a while lived happily with his dusky wife and new-found friends, the savages. But after a while the life palled upon him; he sighed for the friends he had left behind, and grew sad and melancholy. His wife noted this and tried to think of some way to cheer him up. She had noticed that this Spaniard, like all his companion "conquistadores," had a raging thirst for gold, and as she knew of a rich mine she disclosed to him its location, in the hope that it might restore his spirits.

And it did; but the very first thought of the Spaniard, after he had found the golden storehouse, was of his comrades and his old commander, Don Bartholomew Columbus. As a deserter he was liable to punishment; but as one who could communicate tidings of rich gold deposits he would probably be exempt, and even win the grateful regard of his commander. It was even so. After the soldier had returned to Isabella and told Don Bartholomew of his discovery, he was made captain of a company and sent out for further exploitations. Following his lead, Don Bartholomew crossed the island and found, not alone the gold mine, but — what was of greater

consequence — a fine harbor and site for a city. He lost no time in removing the inhabitants of Isabella to this new site at the mouth of the river Ozama, and thus the city of Santo Domingo was founded in 1496.

The first settlement on the Ozama was on the left bank of the river, where a chapel was built — the ruins of which may be seen at this day — and a small tower. In the doorway of this chapel, by the way, the arrogant Bobadilla, who was sent out to supersede Columbus, read his proclamation of authority from the king of Spain; and in the tower both Columbus and Bartholomew were confined as prisoners by this same Bobadilla, ere they were sent home to Spain with manacles on their limbs. The acts of Don Bartholomew were sanctioned by his brother Christopher, and it is possible that he may himself have ordered the tower, or castle, to be built. But it was not the castle that still stands, and to which allusion was made at the opening of this chapter.

In or about the year 1502, the inhabitants of the new settlement removed to the right bank of the Ozama, and there began the city which exists to-day, and which is probably the oldest on this continent.

It was not until about 1509 that the great castle or citadel was built, during the viceroyalty of Don Diego Columbus. All readers of history know that Christopher Columbus had two sons, one named Fernando, and the other Diego — the English of which is James. While Fernando was more intellectual

than Diego, he was not so ambitious in a worldly way. He wrote an admirable life of his father, and a history of his doings; but Diego married a great lady of King Ferdinand's court, and so gained favor for his house, which his sovereign would not otherwise have granted.

Perhaps all this may seem to have little to do with the old castle of which mention has been made; but it has a great deal to do with it. For if Don Diego Columbus had not married the daughter of a powerful Spanish grandee, he would not have been in position to fight for the family fortune and titles, of which King Ferdinand had virtually deprived his father, the old admiral, allowing him to die in poverty and almost in disgrace. If he had not revived the family titles, he would not have been sent out to the West Indies as viceroy, to the island his father discovered in 1492; and if he had not gone to the island, he could not have built the castle in the year 1509. That seems plain enough. If he had not been on the island, he could not have erected a castle there; and if he had not been a viceroy, with almost unlimited power, he would have had neither authority nor money to build it with, as stated.

Don Diego Columbus, then, had married the beautiful and amiable lady of Isabella and Ferdinand's court, Maria de Toledo; and the king, wishing to show him some signal honor, — and at the same time get rid of him, — sent him off as a viceroy to the

island of Hispaniola, as Santo Domingo was at that time called. There he set up his little court, and for a while was in effect the king of the West Indies, with several millions of Indians and a few thousand Spaniards as subjects; the former, in fact, more slaves than anything else. All this may be verified by reference to Washington Irving's "Life of Columbus," in which the occurrences of the times in which these great personages lived are set forth at length, and with a charm of style peculiar to that gifted author.

Don Diego and his wife, the vice-reine, made quite a stir on their arrival, according to the historians, and quite turned the island topsy-turvy before they left it for good and all. Don Diego established the first viceregal court in the West Indies — in the New World, in fact — and "set the pace" for all who were to follow after. He also built himself a palace close by the Ozama's bank, the ruins of which are still to be seen, and which at that time was the grandest structure ever erected by any European on this side of the Atlantic. It was of stone, with an overlook of the river and sea, and so solidly constructed, with such thick walls and strong, wide battlements, that Don Diego's enemies — and their name was legion — soon sent word to the king that in all probability his viceroy intended to cast off his allegiance and set up a little kingdom of his own. They particularly warned King Ferdinand of his possibly evil inten-

tions when he built the great castle, which is now called the "Homenage," and drew dismal pictures of what the West Indies would become if sent adrift from the paternal tutelage of the king of Spain. They would doubtless have been much better off, especially the Indian dwellers in them, who were robbed and murdered without let or hindrance.

But Don Diego had no such intentions as were ascribed to him, for he was loyal to the core, and being gifted with common sense, he had no idea whatever of declaring himself king of America. Not even after he had sent out an expedition, which made settlements in Cuba a few years later, had he any thought of severing his allegiance. So that statement may be passed over as a malicious fabrication of his enemies, who wanted him discredited, mainly because he was inclined to put a check upon their barbarous treatment of the Indian.

But that is another story all by itself. This particular tale has to do with the old castle, primarily, because at the moment it opens there were confined in it two boys — heroes of the story — who started out to find gold in Santo Domingo, and came to grief through a series of circumstances which will be explained later on.

It was while these boys were immured in the old castle that Don Diego built, that the United States Consul to Santo Domingo, Mr. Henry Garland, ascended the tortuous stairway, half inside and half

outside the tower, to a point of vantage on its battlements whence he could look down upon the glorious view outspread on every side.

As some very important business had gone wrong that day, the Consul was perhaps more absorbed in his own thoughts than in the view he was looking down upon. For half an hour or so he stood idly in one position, paying little heed to what was going on about him. There was, in fact, very little going on about him, except the swifts and swallows that were cleaving the air in their hunt for insects, but directly beneath him there was much indeed of human interest.

A great noise suddenly came up from below, and caused him to start from his revery with a gasp of astonishment and indignation. For, the very instant that he perceived he was looking directly into the prison pen attached to the castle, — a point which in his preoccupation he had not noticed, — he saw that there was a great commotion amongst the prisoners within the high wall which fenced them off from the sea. The enclosure was not large, and being open, he could look all over it, but within it were at least a hundred men. Ninety-eight of this hundred — or all but two — were either black or colored, and it really seemed as if all that big rabble of villains was attacking the two.

The dusky brutes hurled themselves upon those two with white complexions as if they had been a

football crowd and were determined to flatten them to the earth. And they did, for the pair, though they stood back to back and fought the blacks off most valiantly, were evidently overborne and crushed to earth like a couple of pancakes. They became lost in the mêlée as the black sea rolled over them, and it was at this juncture that the Consul happened to have his attention called to the spectacle.

"The scoundrels!" he exclaimed to himself, "to pitch upon two inoffensive boys like that!" Then he raised his voice to some purpose, — for, let it be observed, he was only about one hundred and fifty feet above the pen, — and shouted to the blacks: "Come off, you villains; leave those men alone, or I'll have you shot, every one of you! Do you hear me? I am the American Consul!"

II.

Our Consul to the Rescue.

IF you had seen that writhing mass of half-naked beings, knotted together like so many black serpents, every face that was visible distorted with rage or hate, you would not have thought the Consul's threat would have had any effect whatever upon wretches already so miserable that many of them would have welcomed death by shooting as a relief from their troubles. And, truth to tell, it was not the threat that reached them and made the mass uncoil and separate into its individual elements. For threats these poor wretches cared nothing, as seven-tenths of them knew that death was their portion, sooner or later, and the only friend that awaited them at the end of their imprisonment. But most of them knew the Consul as a powerful friend in their behalf on many previous occasions, as one who had stoutly stood between them and, perhaps, a worse fate than imprisonment, — for hope is always present in the breast of the prisoner, — and they obeyed him instantly. The few who were unaware of the Consul's personality and power went sullenly,

and only after giving vicious kicks at the prostrate and now motionless forms.

"Keep away from them until I get down. Remember, now!" With which warning, his menacing tone conveying a threat more than his words, the Consul leaped down the stone steps three at a time, and was soon pounding at the outer door of the castle. The tower was semi-detached, it should be explained, and had a separate entrance from the castle proper, in which the prisoners were immured. His sturdy blows soon brought a black face to the grated window in the massive door, and a surly voice inquired in Spanish what he wanted.

"I want you to admit me at once," replied the Consul. "Those white prisoners of yours have been set upon by a crowd and perhaps murdered. You must have seen it all."

"Oh, yes, I saw it all, and a fine fight it was, too."

"A fine fight! You miserable coward! And you stood by and let those boys be murdered? Wait till I get a report to the President!"

The black face grinned, showing a double row of teeth like lion's fangs. "*El Presidente!* Oho! Señor Consul. Do you know who sent those Americanos here? *El Presidente mismo* — the President himself!"

"What? President Heureaux sent them here? What for?"

"Who knows? But he sent them, and he doesn't

care how soon they are thrown over the wall and into the sea for the sharks to eat. But what do I say? Señor Consul, do not tell Lelee of this."

The Consul saw that nothing was to be gained by threats with this man, and he knew that time was precious, so he swallowed his wrath and tried another way.

"Look here," he said. "I must get at those boys right away. They may be dead, and if they are, you shall suffer for it. But if they are not, and can be revived, you shall be rewarded. Now, how much salary do you get? Tell me quickly."

"Ho, that is soon told. I don't get anything. Promises? Yes, but *plata* — silver — it is months since I have seen any."

"I thought so. Now, if you will admit me, I will give you ten dollars in gold. But you must assist me; give me a room where I can have those young men cared for. Understand?"

"*Si*, Señor Consul, I understand. There, the door is open," said the jailer, drawing the great rusty bolts and bars. "Enter, Señor Consul. If Lelee knows this, it will cost me my position, perhaps my life; but ten dollars! Did you say ten dollars, Señor Consul?"

"Yes, I said ten dollars, and here are five of them. Now look sharp. Lead me into the pen at once!"

"Wait, Señor Consul, till I have bolted the door, and wait till I have counted these dollars. My faith,

I haven't seen so much money since I was made jailer here; for, mind you, Lelee takes good care the prisoners have nothing when they arrive."

"Well. Will you never get through counting that money? Come, open this inner door. What are you about?"

"Pardon, Señor Consul, but the music of these dollars is so sweet. Hear them clink in my pocket. Wait till I count them again."

"You fool! I've a mind to throttle you, here and now. Get along with you. Unlock that door, I say!"

"*Si, si,* — yes, yes. There, look, your countrymen are there. See, they have not moved."

"No, they have not moved," answered the Consul, turning upon the jailer so fiercely that he crouched as if in fear with outstretched hands. "And if they are dead, remember, I will make you suffer for this. And you, too, cowardly rascals that you are," facing the crowd of blacks huddled in a corner. "Do you know what you have done? You have assaulted free-born Americans. You have insulted my country as well as injured these men, perhaps have killed them; and do you think that I, as representative of the most powerful government on earth, will allow this to pass? No! Not if I have to raze this city to the ground! To think of such wretches as you and your rulers flying in the face of the American eagle! Pah! Come here, jailer, help me raise these men and carry them in out of the sun."

Others would have assisted, but the Consul waved them back. He stooped over and tenderly drew one of the boys out of the mud and filth into which they had been stamped by the bare feet of their brutal opponents. With the jailer's assistance he bore him into the latter's private room, and then went back for the other. Both were laid out on the floor, the jailer's cot being too narrow for more than one, and the Consul proceeded to ascertain their real condition. Washing the blood and dirt from their faces, and the clotted gore from their hair, he found that though cruelly mangled they were yet alive.

One of them finally gasped and choked, as though his throat was full of blood, and the other breathed as if internally injured; still, it was something, their good Samaritan thought, that they lived. He happened to have in his pocket a powerful restorative, and a few drops between the lips of each revived them so that they opened their eyes almost simultaneously. Seeing a white face over them, in place of the black countenances which had met them on every hand for weeks, they seemed relieved and gathered courage.

In response to the questioning look in their eyes the Consul said: "Cheer up my friends, you are in good hands. I'll have you out of this filthy place very soon. You are Americans, are you not?"

They nodded yes, and one of them said in a feeble

voice: "We are brothers, and we don't know why we are imprisoned. We have done nothing to break the laws, but they seem to want to kill us."

"Well, they shan't. I am the American Consul, and as sure as there is justice, I will get redress from this government for you. I cannot get you out of prison to-day, I fear, for as you were incarcerated by a so-called process of law, the jailer cannot release you without an order from the judge or President. But how do you feel? Any bones broken?"

"I think not," murmured the elder of the two, a boy of about eighteen. "How are you, brother?" He turned on his side with difficulty and placed an arm around the younger boy. "Oh, tell me you are not hurt, Hart, dear. Not badly hurt!"

"I guess I'm all right," replied the other cheerily, but in a very weak voice. "The blood chokes me so, I can't speak very well."

The elder looked at the Consul appealingly, and the latter said: "Keep a good heart, I will go now for a doctor. Here, jailer, fetch some clean straw for these boys to lie on. And while I am gone, have an eye to them, will you?"

"Assuredly, Señor Consul. And you will bring the money with you; no? The other five dollars, you know."

"Oh, yes, I'll have the money for you, but I'll have something else you don't like so well, if you neglect my friends. Understand?"

"Perfectly, Señor Consul. You may do with me what you will, only bring me the *pesos*. *Adios*, I will guard them till you come back."

"Good-by, my boys," said the Consul, pressing a hand of each. "I will have a nurse and a doctor here within an hour, and till then rest quietly as you can. Do not mind if I don't make an appearance again to-day, as I shall have to visit the palace about your release. I know the President's disposition and how to manage him; and if, as the jailer says, he has had you confined here for reasons of his own, hardly anything short of an earthquake will move him. Still, as a last resort, I shall have one unanswerable argument for him, and he may thank his stars if this castle doesn't come tumbling down about his ears. Yes, you rascal," turning to the gaping jailer, who had heard this last statement with open mouth, "if anything further happens to these lads, down comes your house. *Sabé?*"

"*Si*, señor," answered the black with alacrity, "I hear you. But, Señor Consul, can you command the thunder and the lightning?"

"A pretty good imitation, if not the genuine article," replied the Consul, laughing. "At any rate, I can give this government a scare, and don't forget I said so. Good-by, boys; keep up your courage."

It was not far to the consulate, only a matter of ten minutes' walk, and soon the Consul entered a fine old building two stories in height, over the door-

way of which was a shield on which was painted the American eagle grasping the traditional arrows.

"You're a brave old bird," said the Consul, addressing the eagle as he went in, "but now and then some miserable government like this pulls out a few of your tail feathers, so to speak. But it doesn't do it twice; and when we get through with it there will be a little more knowledge in this so-called republic about international comity, even if we have to drive it in with powder and ball."

The Consul's clerk, a native of the island, whom the Consul more than suspected of being in the President's secret service and pay, sat writing at a desk.

"Good morning, Pedro. Has any one been here to see me?"

"No, señor; only those shipwrecked sailors who say they expect you to send them home by the next steamer."

"Oh, bother the sailors! They pester the life out of me. How do they expect to go home, first class and with every luxury? No, Pedro; they are able-bodied seamen, and they shall go before the mast, or else stay here forever, for all me, and you tell them so next time they 'heave in sight.' By the way, do you know if the President is at the palace to-day? I want to call on him."

"I think so, sir. But what is it to see him about? Anything I can do? Pardon, sir, there seems to be

a blood spot on your cuff. I trust nothing serious has happened." And the clerk looked suspicious.

"Not at all. Perhaps I scratched myself somehow. Call Sam and send him to the palace at once, while I am dressing, with my compliments and a request for an interview with his Excellency in an hour. And just step around the corner and ask Dr. Fernandez to call at once. When he comes, send him right up to my room."

While the clerk and the office boy were out on their errands, the Consul had his housekeeper make up a package of jellies and dainties good for invalids, which were all ready when the doctor came. After the customary greetings, he told him about the two prisoners at the castle, and asked if he wouldn't go over and do what he could for them. To his great surprise, the doctor at first hesitated; but when assured that the boys might die if not soon attended to, he finally consented. But as he took his leave, he said: "You know, Consul, this act will not only jeopardize my practice, but perhaps put my life in danger. However, I go, trusting to you to see me through."

"I will, never fear," declared the Consul, heartily. "I'll protect you."

III.

Diamond cut Diamond.

THE government palace was a pretentious building not far from the old cathedral, which latter had withstood the storms of more than three hundred and fifty years. It — the palace — was long and rambling, with a wide doorway opening into an enclosed court around which were the offices of the governmental clerks and their employees.

A black sentry stood guard at the door with a loaded musket, which he brought to present-arms as the Consul made his appearance and alighted from his carriage. He offered no objection to his entering, and the visitor crossed the court and ascended the stairway to the upper floor, where were the council chambers and the President's private reception room. Another sentry was on guard here, but he, too, knowing that the visitor was a high official, only followed the example of his comrade on duty below and allowed him to enter unchallenged. Once inside, a colored servitor took his card to an inner room, and soon the Consul found himself in the presence of President Ulises Heureaux, Executive of the government and despot of Santo Domingo.

As this gentleman not long ago had a real existence and is by no means a fictitious character, it behooves us to take a good look at him before we proceed further, and make his acquaintance while the opportunity presents.

He was a man of middle size, brown as to complexion and well knit as to frame, with close-cropped, curly black hair, and a stern countenance. If we had met him on the street we should have been attracted by his personality, there was so much of authority in his carriage and of absolute power in his face. His nose was large and flat, his cheek bones prominent, and his lips coarse and sensuous; but his eyes flashed determination, and sometimes, more than that, — they glowed and glowered like a tiger's, boding disaster or death to any who might be brave enough or rash enough to oppose him.

Little of his history is known, except that he was born in one of the English islands of the West Indies, that he came to Santo Domingo as an adventurer in search of fortune, and joining the insurgents of that time (for the island was always in the throes of some revolution or other), somehow leaped to power, and once having grasped the reins of government never once let them go. He had held those reins, at the time we make his acquaintance, for many years, and the island had groaned long and vainly under his oppressions. He had imprisoned men and women at his pleasure, sent their sons and brothers to the

wars, their sisters and daughters to hopeless slavery of the worst sort, and had filled the jails with his victims, rarely releasing them unless to have them shot or hanged.

Our Consul well knew that he had some reason sufficient to himself for imprisoning our young countrymen, and he also knew that he would not have had the knowledge of that fact get to his ears for any amount of money. For if there was one thing the despotic President feared, it was the government of the United States; and as the representative of that government, the Consul was respected, even held in awe.

Our government had never as yet exerted any of its power in actually opposing the President, but he was well aware that it stood for everything he ignored: for the honor he daily violated, for the sacredness of human life which he held so cheaply; and it was as a moral as well as material force that he feared it. This point our Consul knew was in his favor at the opening of negotiations, and he resolved to make the most of it in behalf of our friends, as he was certain the President would not give them up without a desperate struggle.

It was to be a battle royal, — that he knew. But he never once admitted to himself that it would result in anything but victory. What is that about having our cause just at the outset? You remember, probably. The battle is more than half won, with

honor and justice on our side. In the end these twain will always triumph.

So thought the Consul, so he knew; but though convinced of the ultimate triumph of his cause, he reasoned that in this particular case justice must be speedy or it would come too late. As he thought of those two maltreated countrymen of his, and ours, lying bruised and bleeding in the castle, he burned with suppressed indignation; but at the same time he knew that for their sakes he must be outwardly calm and collected.

"Ah, *buenos dias*, Señor Consool. What ees eet I do for you this day?"

So spake the great man in most affable tones, shaking the Consul's hand heartily and leading him to a seat.

"Good morning, your Excellency. I have called about a small matter which I have no doubt will soon be put right. I have learned that there are two Americans imprisoned in the Homenage Castle, and would like an order for their release."

That was a blunt, perhaps undiplomatic way of broaching the subject; but the Consul knew with whom he had to deal, and he knew there was nothing to be gained by "beating about the bush." Either the President would deny all knowledge of the prisoners, or he would admit the possibility of their being there, but shift the responsibility for their arrest and incarceration upon some subordinate. He did both, for

after lifting his eyebrows incredulously and spreading out his hands, as though this was the very first intimation he had received of their existence, he said: —

"What you say, Missee Consool? Two Americanos in ze Homenage? Two countreemen of you, eh? I sink perhap you mistaken; no?"

The President could speak French as well as Spanish, the latter being the language universally spoken in Santo Domingo; but he also thought he could speak English, and in his intercourse with America's representative, did so in order to exhibit his accomplishment.

"No, your Excellency, I am not mistaken; for I have seen them myself, and they have been most brutally treated by the other prisoners, so that I wish to get them out and over to the consulate, where they can receive proper attention. But I felt sure you did not know of their imprisonment, and since that is so, and as I will give bonds for their good behavior and appearance at court if they are to be tried, I simply ask their release, as a favor to me and to my government."

"Oh, ah, you ask for they release, eh? And dose you gobernment know of dis? Ees it in ze name of Onkel Sam you ask zis favor, or as one favor to yourself?"

"Well, at this moment I am asking it for myself."

"So? Vel zen, suppose I say I do not grant eet, eh?"

The President's beady black eyes twinkled ferociously, and he clutched his left arm with his right hand, while his lips curled in a malicious grin. Those who knew "Lelee," as they called him, — this being a contraction of his name, Ulises, — said that whenever he clutched that left arm there was trouble ahead for his opponent, for it was an old trick of his and they knew it well. That same arm had been shattered by a bullet, was withered and almost helpless, and he nursed it like a baby. But when he sniffed a battle, or was bent on taking life, he seized it as though it were his enemy's throat and he would strangle the life out of it at once.

The Consul knew the symptoms, but was not deterred either by the unfailing sign that Lelee had raised the black flag with "no quarter" on it, or by the steely glitter in his eyes.

"Do you mean to say, Mr. President, that you would defy my government, allow your people to insult its citizens and my flag?"

The President shrugged his shoulders and threw out his hands. "Oh, as to dat, Missee Consool, eef you gobernment take sooch interest in two worseless boys zat have commit crime in my island, why, I haf nozing more to say. Only, eef zey are in ze jail, eet is for soofeecient raison, and you must give me some more raison zat you haf not done alraidy, before I let zem out."

"My government, Mr. President, takes an interest

in every man, woman, or child born under its flag and entitled to its protection. If you have not found that out, then you have not violated the law heretofore; or the office I now hold was filled by some man unworthy the name of American! The time has passed when a citizen of the United States was ashamed of the country he was born in, and the time has come when no nation, however strong, can lay its hands upon such an American and not rue the day it did it! Mark these words!

"And again, these two boys for whom I am interceding have committed no crime. But if they have committed a crime, according to your view of it, they shall come out of that prison just the same, for you have my word of honor that they shall be held subject to the law."

The President's eyes flashed, and he said with a sneer: "Ah, so? You take great interest in zose boys zat commit crime in my island. But zey have done somezings I cannot forgeeve; for exampl', zey haf murder tree of my best soldier, zey haf keel two girl zat geev no offence to zem, zey haf prowl about ze countree robbing and keeling. Eet is for zat I haf put zem in ze castle, un'stand?"

"Oh, yes. I understand that you said a few moments ago you had no knowledge of them at all, and now you enumerate their hypothetical crimes. Crimes which, if you were as honest as they are, you could not bring yourself to admit for a moment they

could commit. But enough. You have admitted they were sent to the castle by your orders. I have fixed the responsibility for this act, and now that it is brought home to the head of this government — namely, yourself — I shall know where to seek redress! Once for all, I ask you: Will you issue an order for the release of those boys, or will you force me to proceed to extremities?"

The President saw too late his mistake in admitting any knowledge of the prisoners, and bit his lips till the blood came. If the man before him were not a foreigner and an official of rank, he would have had no compunctions in ordering a file of soldiers in to take him out to be shot. But unfortunately, so he thought, there was no way in which he could gratify his bloodthirsty inclinations. He could not shoot the Consul, and as matters now stood, with that gentleman in possession of the facts about the prisoners, he could not shoot them, either. But he could, and he would, shoot somebody, even if it had to be one of his own subjects! Whom could he spare best? Or rather, whom did he hate most? Ha! How did the Consul get his information? Why, it must have been through the jailer, for he had had strict orders not to allow a single person within the castle's walls. Before replying to the Consul's demand, Lelee sent for his orderly, to whom he gave a whispered message. Then he said: —

"Ah, escuse me, Missey Consool. I haf eempor-

tant beesness. Now I am at your servaice." There was a gleam of malicious satisfaction in his eyes, which the Consul could not account for, seeing that he was apparently pushing him to the wall. "You want zat ordair for ze release? Vell, you vill not get eet! Ze preesonair shall stay zere and die first! Zat ees my answair. Ees zat all, Missey Consool?"

"Yes, that is all," said the Consul, taking up his hat. "That is — all just at present. But —"

"Ah, yes, I know what you vill say: Zat eef harm come to ze boys you vill blow ze roof off ze palais. Poof! I haf hear zat before. *Adios*, Señor Consool. Look een as you pass ze parade ground and you vill see zomesings zat show you ze power of Lelee! Adios."

"That was a case of 'diamond cut diamond,'" mused the Consul, as he walked down the street, "and for the nonce it looks as if the black diamond had cut the white one. But we shall see. Ha, why is that crowd gathering at the parade ground? Somebody to be shot? Who is it this time, I wonder?" Then Lelee's words recurred to him, and his heart grew faint for a second. Even as he looked in at the gate the report of musketry rang out, and a man, who had been standing against a wall in front of a line of soldiers, fell upon his face.

"Who is it?" the Consul asked of a passer-by.

"Who? Oh, the jailer at the castle. He somehow offended Lelee!"

IV.

Turn About is Fair Play.

AT first the Consul was petrified with astonishment, then almost dismayed, for in this act he recognized defiance, not only of himself, but of his government. Lelee had, in effect, said to him: "Do your worst. I defy you! I have sole right of enacting laws in my island; you interfere at your peril! As I have done to this servant of mine, so I have power to do to you and your friends. Take warning, and let them and me alone!"

A crowd had gathered, and, following after the excited people, the Consul approached the soldiers who had constituted the firing party. They were twelve in number, and the smoke was still drifting from the muzzles of their rifles as the Consul reached the scene of death. In front of them, prone on his face, lay the unfortunate jailer, blood oozing from many wounds. He had predicted truly; his employer had avenged his dereliction from duty with his life blood!

The soldiers were as indifferent as if this were an everyday occurrence; and indeed, the shooting of a man or woman merely to gratify a whim of the ruler

was no uncommon thing. They were chatting together, taking no notice of the victim of their murderous aim, and the crowd, though curious to see who it was had been slain, evinced no other feeling. They were used to such spectacles, and only felt concerned when the victim was one of their own family or an intimate friend. As the jailer had endeared himself to nobody, nobody cared whether he lay there all day or not, and none lamented his unhappy fate.

The Consul took all this in at one swift glance, then turned on his heel and walked rapidly toward the river. His plan of action was developed the moment he was cognizant of what had been done. He knew there was now no time for delay, that every minute's delay might be fraught with danger; and he acted accordingly.

Arrived at one of the wharves on the river bank, he entered a large warehouse, where, seated at a desk in its office, was a small, brown man with bright black eyes and intelligent face, writing rapidly.

"Ah, Mr. Garland, good morning; or rather good afternoon. I wanted to see you about — But what is the matter? You look disturbed."

"Matter, Don Santos? Why, I have just witnessed the shooting of the castle jailer. Did you not hear the volley?"

"Oh, yes. But I pay no attention to such things as that now, for what's the use? Lelee is going to

have his daily victim, whatever comes. And after all, that jailer will be no great loss to the community, as you yourself must admit."

"No, Don Santos, I admit nothing of the sort. A life is a life in the sight of God, and this shedding of human blood must be stopped. And what is more, I am going to stop it!"

Don Santos shrugged his shoulders; for though he was a Vice-consul of the United States, and confidential agent of the government when Mr. Garland was absent from his post, he was a native Dominican, and did not take such serious views of the situation as his friend.

"You can't stop it," he rejoined, "for what excuse can you raise for interfering in the concerns of this island?"

"I have one, already," said the Consul. "And it is about this very thing I have come to consult you. Not to consult you, either, for my mind is made up as to my course, but to get you to aid me. Santos, listen. Can any one overhear me?"

"No, Consul, we are alone and not even the wiliest of Lelee's spies can hear a word you say."

"Good! Santos, tell me where the *Capricornia* was the last you heard from her. Can I reach her by cable this very moment?"

"Yes, Consul, and that reminds me, I have just received a message from her commander, reporting her arrival at Ponce."

"At Ponce? Good! She can get here by to-morrow morning at daybreak, can she not? Give me the cable code, Santos. Connect your wire with the cable end. No, don't ask me why just now. Do as I tell you."

The wondering Vice-consul connected his office with the cable house on the shore, and in three minutes reported all ready. Then he sat down at his instrument and from the Consul's dictation took the following message, which was flashed along at lightning speed:—

"Commander U.S. cruiser *Capricornia*, Ponce, Porto Rico. Bismuth, Bicarbonate, Bobolink, Bulgaria.

(Signed) "U.S. Consul Garland,
Santo Domingo City."

"There!" exclaimed the Consul, "if that doesn't fetch him, my cake may be dough. Did you tell the operator to return answer?"

"Yes, Don Enrique (Spanish for Henry). He will send answer soon as received. But what, in the name of all the saints, do you want of another United States warship here now? My faith, we have hardly recovered from entertaining the officers of the last one. I had thought there was not to be another for six months. So the general orders said when we last received them, as you may recollect."

"True, Santos, and in the ordinary course of events, we should not be favored with another visit

from one in the length of time you mention. That is what Lelee thinks, too, and that accounts for his outrageous behavior. He thinks there will not be an American man-of-war here for half a year, so he has defied me and my government, hoping perhaps that all will blow over before the time comes for a reckoning. But this time he is mistaken, and before I get through with him I'm going to make him feel the weight of Uncle Sam's heavy hand!"

"But he must have known of the arrival of the warship at Ponce, only a hundred miles or so away, and he must have been aware, too, that under the circumstances, you would be likely to send for her. In that case, if I am correct, why didn't he stop the cable?"

"My dear Santos, you are correct, both as to your surmise and — excuse me for saying it — simple as to your understanding. Why do you suppose I came here to send that message, when I might just as readily have sent it from my office? Was it not because I knew Lelee would have already anticipated the act, and have intercepted the message on the way? I have a 'phone there, to be sure; but there also is Pedro, a hireling of Lelee's, right at my elbow, and with eyes and ears always open!"

"To be sure, Consul. What a dolt I was for not thinking of it. But why do you keep Pedro there in the consulate, knowing him to be a paid spy of the President's?"

"Oh, because I *know* he is a spy, and if I should

discharge him it would excite suspicion, while another clerk might be just as bad, and I not be acquainted with his methods. As it is, I can follow the processes of Pedro's mind to a certainty. I know in advance just when he is going to the palace with information against me. And what is more, I am always pretty sure what he carries, for I prepare it for him. I take care, you know, that he shall carry only the right sort!"

"Good!" said Don Santos, laughing heartily. "I had a notion that Pedro was not fooling you very much, but I didn't think you were deceiving Lelee at the same time. It is a very clever man who can get ahead of 'his Excellency,' my dear Consul."

"Granted," rejoined the Consul. "But I don't take any great credit to myself. If in the end I succeed in outwitting Lelee, it will be because I am honest and above board, while 'his Excellency' reckons upon my being deep, cunning, and knavish, like himself. The trouble with him is that he is so steeped in iniquity that he can't understand purity of purpose or honesty. When I make such a statement as I did to him this morning, for instance: that unless he releases those boys at the castle I will use force, — he thinks I am 'bluffing.' But he will find out pretty soon that I was not, and particularly if the right sort of message comes from Ponce."

"Pardon me, Consul, but I don't understand what you mean by the 'boys in the castle.' Are they

Americans, and is it on account of them that you are raising all this row? I thought you were beside yourself to call a warship just on account of that little shooting to-day. Tell me about them, and let me help you if I can."

"I will, Santos; for, to tell the truth, I feel quite concerned about them — more than ever since Lelee has shown his tigerish disposition by shooting their jailer and leaving them without a single protector, in that jail full of criminals." Then the Consul explained the situation fully, and when he was through, Don Santos agreed with him that it was critical, and called for immediate action of some sort. But what could they do before the warship arrived, and — disquieting thought — what should they do if it did not arrive at all?

A telephone call attracted their attention, and while the Vice-consul received and wrote down the message, the Consul translated it by the code book's aid. It was as follows: "Jinrikisha, Arkansas, Solis, Sacramento, Alternate."

"He's coming," almost shouted the Consul, in his delight at the good news. "Commander Davis says he will be here to-morrow morning at daybreak, and will liberate us as soon as possible. I wonder what he means by that. He must have misunderstood my message. But, no matter; the main fact is he's coming, and the question now is, shall I inform Lelee of the news, or leave him to find it out for himself?"

"Don't bother about Lelee," replied the Vice-consul. "The chances are that he knows it already."

"No, I don't think so," rejoined the Consul. "But, will you go with me to the castle, to see if we can establish communication with the prisoners? I'm afraid, though, we shall have difficulty in getting in, now that my friend, the former jailer, is dead. However, if you approve, we'll try, anyway."

"I don't think it's any use," said the Vice-consul. "Lelee has somebody there in his place whom he can absolutely trust, and he probably has orders not to allow any one to approach. If only they can hang out till the morning, we shall be able then to enforce our demands; till then, patience and watchfulness should be our watchwords. We must be on guard against surprises, for our enemy is a crafty and at the same time a desperate man. He is one who would not hesitate, if he thought his fortunes were at stake, to burn the city over our heads, and if possible murder us before doing so."

"You are right, Santos, I believe; and yet it is hard to leave them alone another night, with no hope of possible rescue; nothing to sustain them in their misery, even if they are unharmed. It is a terrible situation, and I wish I could relieve it. Santos, I believe I will attempt it, anyway. You needn't go, you have a wife and family; but I'll take the risk, if only to ascertain if they are alive and likely to last till morning."

"No, no, Don Enrique; you shall not go alone. I will go, too. They will not dare harm us, of course; I was only thinking of the expediency of the move, believing it better not to excite the rascals by our presence. There is no knowing what Lelee will do next; but of one thing I am certain: that, if he thought it possible for his prisoners to escape, he would rather shoot them than stand the consequences. However, we can go out and reconnoitre. There will be no harm in that. Here, this way. I will show you a short cut to the castle."

The two started out by the doorway indicated by Don Santos, but the Consul, who was ahead, had hardly put his foot outside when he was almost impaled upon a gleaming bayonet pointed at his breast. He started back in surprise, but, recovering himself, demanded, "What do you mean by this?"

But the soldier at the other end of the gun to which the bayonet was affixed stood his ground, scowling as he muttered, "By order of the President!"

V.

How the Tables were Turned.

"WELL, Santos," said the Consul, as he backed into the office, "this is a fine state of affairs, is it not? What can we do?"

"Nothing at present, it appears to me, Don Enrique. We are prisoners, without a doubt. But we are as good as forty dead men." The Vice-consul spoke carelessly, and rolling a cigarette, lighted it, and seating himself, sent rings of smoke up to the ceiling, while his friend stared at him in blank amazement.

"Perhaps you are used to this sort of thing, Santos," the Consul said at last, rather vexed with the Vice-consul for taking it so much as a matter of course; "but, aside from the affront to my government in treating its representatives with such indignity, I regard this as an insult which cannot be overlooked."

"Very true, Don Enrique, and I feel it the same as you do; but it's no use to fume or worry. We shall have our opportunity when the warship gets here, and if you don't make Lelee walk a chalk-line, I will throw up my position as Vice-consul. But,

look here, the thing has its funny features, after all."

He drew the Consul to the window, and pointed to a negro climbing a telephone pole. "Ha, ha! the black monkey is going to cut the wire, so we can have no communication with the ship. See the humor of it? Locking the stable door after the horse is stolen, eh?"

"It is rather funny," assented the Consul, smiling. "But it occurs to me that when Lelee finds that the message has already been sent, he will take revenge on the cable operator, Santos. What do you think of that?" The Vice-consul looked grave at once.

"I hadn't thought of it; but it is true, he will. I wouldn't give a dollar for poor Ben's chance of life when the President finds out the true condition of things."

"The man hasn't quite gotten to the wire yet, has he? Can't you stick your head out and create a diversion for a minute or two while I send a warning to Ben?"

"Of course, Santos. That's right. Go ahead, while I try to hold the wire for you."

The Consul opened the door and hailed the black man up the pole. There were a hundred or more other soldiers scattered about in the open space in front of the warehouse, and they all sprang to arms with great alacrity when the Consul made his ap-

pearance; but seeing that he made no effort to escape, they resumed their former attitudes of repose. Meanwhile, Santos was calling up the cable operator in his little hut down by the river mouth a mile or so away: —

"Hello, Ben. That you? Yes? Well, listen; your life is in peril. Lelee has his soldiers out looking for trouble. But if you can hide over night somewhere, there will be a warship here in the morning that will change the aspect of things. Understand? If you can raise a canoe, better take a short run down the coast a bit and watch out for the ship. Board her if you can; at any rate keep shy till you hear good news again. Consul and I are prisoners in the warehouse office, but —" Zip! The wire was cut, and whatever the Vice-consul intended to say was never uttered.

The Consul had but poor success at temporizing, for the man up the pole merely turned his head when shouted at, and then went on climbing again, as for dear life. He had his orders from Lelee, and he knew what it would mean to him if he disobeyed those orders. He had a wife and children in a little grass hut out in the country, and he had no notion of leaving them without a protector, for that is what would result if he disobeyed. Even at that moment an officer had a bead on him with a rifle, and if he delayed an instant, his life would be the penalty of that delay. So he did not hesitate, but went on

climbing, and finally reached the wire and pulled out a pair of shears from his pocket.

"Confound the rascal," muttered the Consul, "I've a good mind to shoot him down. Santos, bring me your revolver!"

But Santos was very busy driving through that message, every second being most precious, and paid no attention to his friend's demand. With the cutting of the wire his work was done, and the Consul, seeing the futility of further remonstrance, withdrew, slamming the door in the face of a lieutenant who came up at the moment, and who seemed much offended at being denied speech with his prisoner in such a summary manner.

"Don't irritate them needlessly, Don Enrique," advised the Vice-consul. "They're bad enough when unprovoked, but no one knows what they will do if irritated. While I don't believe Lelee would dare go to the length of causing our deaths, yet I'm pretty sure he would not punish very severely any of his sub-officers who took it into their heads to put us out of the way."

"So am I, Santos, and I am as well aware as you that it is best to be politic with them; yet there is a limit beyond which I will not go, even if my life be the stake. I will not stay here to be badgered by a troop of ragamuffins like that. You may if you like; but I am going back to my office!"

"Very well, and if you go, I go with you. Here,

take one of these revolvers, and I will take the other. Both are loaded, and if we are attacked we shall not die alone. Wait till I secure the windows and put things to rights, as if I were going out merely on a business call. I will lock the door, too, and if any damage is done, somebody will have to pay for it. Now I am ready."

Don Santos was a methodical man of business, above all else, as his every action showed. He was honest as daylight, and reliable as the sun itself. The Consul depended upon his advice in all important matters, and it had never led him astray. This quiet little man was a tower of moral strength, and with him by his side, the superior official felt that he could easily face a larger gathering than that mob of blacks outside. So he said: —

"That's right, Santos. We won't stay here to be treated like rats in a trap, but we'll charge the enemy at once. Bring along our flag, too, Santos. We'll wrap it around us, and then see if these barbarians will dare touch us in the folds of Old Glory!"

The Consul stepped outside, followed by Don Santos, who turned around and locked the door, then with his companion calmly faced the soldiers, who came hurrying forward with their guns held threateningly. The officer in command stepped out in front of the two and asked by what authority they ventured forth without his permission, at the same time laying a hand on the Consul's shoulder. Throwing off the

hand as though it were a viper, the Consul was about to spring upon the officer, when Santos grasped him by the arm.

"No, no, for Heaven's sake, don't touch him! All his men would be upon us in no time. Softly, softly. Let me argue with him."

"What? Argue with this man? Never! Stand aside, sir!" — to the officer. "Stand aside and let us pass! Do you see this? It is the American flag. It is carried by a consul and vice-consul of the United States: a nation of seventy million people, and war-ships enough to demolish your miserable island. Aside, now, and let us pass!"

The Consul threw the flag over his and Don Santos' shoulders and stalked on, regardless of the attempt made by the officer to halt them. But the latter, though at first overawed by the Consul's lofty manner and at sight of the flag, again rallied his men around him and endeavored to stop the fugitives. He again threw himself before the Consul, and this worthy wasted no further words upon him, but let fly a robust fist right in his face, with such good aim and so much force that the man fell flat to the ground.

There was a great hubbub instantly, and several guns were aimed at the white men; but the sight of the Consul and Vice-consul, standing back to back, a revolver in the right hand of each, caused the soldiers who had gathered around to halt, then to separate, then to run, every one of them as if a mad dog

were at his heels. All but the officer who had been sent sprawling to the ground. He still lay there, though he was far from badly hurt, and the Consul, touching him with the toe of his boot, told him to get up and go about his business. This he did with a very crestfallen air and muttering to himself; but when he reached the great gate in the city wall he disappeared with such alacrity that the two friends burst out laughing.

"Well, Santos, we have put that army to flight, and as there seems to be no other battle imminent just now, suppose we wrap up Old Glory and pursue our way to the office. It was a bloodless battle, after all, wasn't it? You see, Santos, you were hardly correct in your estimate of Dominican valor, eh?"

"No," answered the Vice-consul, rather reluctantly. "I'm afraid my countrymen cannot hold the record for bravery. The bravest among them, as you know, is the President, and he drives these poor beggars before him like sheep."

"That's true, Santos, and do you know," rejoined the Consul, as he folded the flag and made it into an unnoticeable bundle, fondly caressing it and smoothing out every wrinkle, "I really believe I have more respect for Lelee, rascal as he is, than I have for the people he rules so ruthlessly? If he would only subdue that barbarous inclination of his for bloodshed, he might do wonders in this island, with all its vast resources and its tractable people."

"Indeed he might," said Santos, "but I fear he is incorrigible. He is like the tiger that has once tasted human blood; he has an unquenchable thirst for it evermore, and having been so long the despot that he is, he will probably come to an untimely end still unregenerate."

Conversing thus so carelessly, having put the revolvers out of sight, the two friends strolled across the open space between the great city wall of the capital and the river, entered the gateway, and took the street that led up the hill toward the consulate.

If so much time had not been consumed in narrating these events that belong rightfully to the story, and which it seems unavoidable to give in full, it might be well to halt here just a moment and give a description of the old wall through which the consuls passed on their way, for it is probably the oldest in this country, and right above and behind it rise the ruins of the *Casa de Colon* — Don Diego's house — to which reference was made in the first chapter. But the writer is as anxious as the reader, doubtless, — and perhaps more so, — to ascertain the condition of the two boys left so long in durance vile at the old castle, and especially after the shooting of the jailer seemed to deprive them of the only man at hand who had an interest in their recovery or liberation. Perhaps the Consul felt in a measure accessory before the fact, since it was the direct result of his mediation

that brought about the shooting. However, as the Consul had not the gift of prescience, and could not have foreseen the terrible result of his interference, he certainly cannot be held responsible for the cruel act of the President. If he failed in aught, it was in assuming he possessed a greater influence with the President than he really had. All men are liable to be mistaken and to overestimate their importance.

VI.

The President makes a Mistake.

THE French have a saying that it is the unexpected that always happens. But not always; for instance, when the two friends arrived at the consulate they fully expected to find a messenger from the President; and sure enough he was there, in the person of his orderly. He saluted respectfully, as though he had no cognizance whatever of the recent doings of the Consul and his assistant, and as they were seated in the office he presented a message from Lelee.

There was indeed a twinkle in the corners of his eyes as he did so, for he could not have been unaware of the fact that these two had put to flight a hundred or so of his master's soldiers, as by this time the whole city knew of it. The spectacle of a company of Lelee's ragamuffins running for dear life through the streets was not an uncommon sight, indeed, and the citizens were sort of used to it; but the manner of their dispersal had somehow leaked out, and a vast crowd was already assembling in front of the consulate.

It was not by any means a bloodthirsty assemblage, however, and was more disposed to regard the two consuls as heroes than as enemies of their country; for any person or persons who would give Lelee and his myrmidons a setback were entitled to their grati-

tude. So we shall leave them there, their numbers steadily augmenting, while the Consul gives his attention to the presidential communication. As it was in Spanish, I shall have to translate it, — an easy matter, as it was brief though pointed.

"To Señor Don Enrique Garland, *Consul General de los Estados Unidos de America del Norte.*

"*Estimado Señor Consul:* It has been brought to my notice that an unprovoked assault was made this afternoon upon a body of my soldiers acting under the order of a gallant officer in my service, Señor Capitan Antonio Pomberoso Fuliginoso, and that notwithstanding he was acting in accordance with orders he had received from officials his superior in station, he, the said Señor Capitan Antonio Pomberoso Fuliginoso, was feloniously set upon and suffered bodily harm at the hands of parties intimately connected with the consular service of the United States in Santo Domingo.

"Be it known, therefore, that I shall cause a watch to be set upon said consular officials and consulate, and shall instruct my Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to communicate with all due speed with the government you have the honor to represent.

"I remain, sir,

"Su atento servido, Q. B. S. M.,

"Ulises Heureaux,

"*Presidente de la Republica.*"

Within half an hour after the Consul had received and digested this communication, the President's orderly was hastening toward the palace with the following:—

"To his Excellency, ULISES HEUREAUX, *Presidente de la Republica de Santo Domingo.*

"*Su Excellencia:* I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your respected favor of this date, and in reply would say that you may save yourself the trouble of communicating with my government, or of setting spies upon its insular representatives, by deferring such proceedings until about six o'clock to-morrow morning, when I shall be in a position to exact reparation for the insults and ignominy you have heaped upon said representatives. I have the honor to remain,

"Your obedient servant,

"HENRY GARLAND,

"*Consul of the United States in Santo Domingo.*"

When the redoubtable Lelee had received and read this interesting epistle, with its veiled threat of coming reparation, he came as near turning pale as he ever did in his brief, though tumultuous, existence. He stormed and swore; he recalled his orderly, who had scarcely left the room, and despatched him at once for the captain of the company that had so

signally failed in its duty. When that individual appeared before him, he found to his horror that his dread master was clutching his left arm as though he would break whatever bones remained unshattered by the bullet of long ago. He at once fell upon his face and refused to be comforted, for he felt his doom was sealed.

"Dog of a *serrano*, despicable son of Belial!" thundered the President in Spanish, "in what manner did you carry out my orders? Did you cut the wires? Did you set a guard around the warehouse and consular residence? Speak, varlet!"

"Your Excellency, I cut the wire leading from the Vice-consul's office, I prevented him and his master from escaping, until — until —"

"Yes, until they had sent a message to the cable office and summoned a warship! Until they sallied forth and put you and your cowardly crew to flight! Cur! You know how I despise a coward! Do you know what I do to cowards? Yes, you do. You do! Well, then, go to the barracks, and order a detail of your best marksmen to be ready for a little shooting party at sunrise to-morrow morning. The moment that Yankee war vessel appears in sight, stand yourself against the blank wall of the carcel and order them to shoot you dead! You may thus retrieve your reputation and bequeath a name untarnished to your family. Go, dog! You have heard me. Go!"

And he went. The valiant capitan, Antonio Pomberoso Fuliginoso, crawled to the door and slunk out of sight; but not wholly out of this narrative, for he will appear again.

"Santos," said the Consul to his worthy squire, who for faithfulness was a veritable Sancho Panza, "Santos, mio, how many minutes, think you, before his Excellency will honor us, all unworthy as we are, with an official visit?"

The twain were then seated at the consular table and were refreshing themselves after the arduous labors and excitement of the day. The Consul was in a most enviable frame of mind, for he had got Lelee at a disadvantage. Not that our representative in that far-off island had a single grain of resentment toward the author of so much inconvenience to him; on the contrary, now that the tables were about to be turned, he rather felt pity for his adversary.

"Well," answered the Vice-consul, "I think he will be here inside of an hour, at the farthest. That letter will rattle him." If there was any one thing the Vice-consul prided himself upon more than another, it was his vocabulary of American slang, which he had learned along with the language, the latter having been mainly acquired from the sailors who frequented the docks along the Ozama's banks. As slang of any sort is not permissible in polite society, and certainly not in any respectable book, an effort will be made to eliminate all obnoxious words

from the Vice-consul's conversation; but if now and then a word slips in that has no business here, it is hoped that both author and reporter will be pardoned. Don Santos was one of the best of men, but he had an idea that his English was the very proper thing, — the language "as she is spoke," in fact, — and as no one reminded him to the contrary, he hardly knew a slang word from one that had been an honor and ornament to the Dictionary since the time of Dr. Johnson.

The hour allotted had hardly expired when a great shout went up from the outside of the consulate: "El Presidente! El Presidente!"

The Consul and Vice-consul looked significantly at each other as the great commotion outside announced the coming of the President, mounted on a big white stallion which he forced through the crowd, regardless of the consequences to his servile subjects in the way. Throwing the reins to his orderly, he leaped from the horse and passed into the consulate, where he was met at the office door by the Consul with a bow and a word of greeting. You would have thought, if you had been favored by a glimpse of the meeting, that it was an occasion of receiving a long-lost brother, or the prodigal son, so effusively did these two greet each other. But there was a smouldering fire in Lelee's black eyes, and a firm set to the Consul's mouth, that presaged something more than was apparent at first glance and on the surface.

"Your Excellency does me great honor," murmured the Consul, as he led the way to the reception room. "I trust your Excellency is well?"

"*Bastante bien*—pretty well, thank your honorable self. And how is the honorable Consul this evening?"

"Well, thank your Excellency. Pray be seated, and allow me to offer some refreshments. No?"

Lelee would take nothing,—nothing but compliments,—and the two sat looking at each other for quite a while. Then at last a grim smile—just the ghost of a grim smile, rather—crept over Lelee's stern, set face, and he burst out with:—

"Vell, Missee Consool, vat is eet you vant, eh? Vat you complain of?"

"I, your Excellency? Nothing, nothing at all, I assure you. My complaints are all in. It is redress, your Excellency, that seems to be in order now."

"Redress? Oh, ah, you mean damage, eh?"

"Well, not exactly damages; but really, I think some sort of salve ought to be applied to the wounds my dignity has received, you know. And then there is the other thing, the original grievance."

"Ah, yes, dose boy. Vell, suppose I railease dose boy? Vat next?"

"Your Excellency is a man of affairs; he knows what international comity requires—demands—better, perhaps, than myself."

"Ah, yes. But vat about dis varsheep dat come

here? Eet ees to help ze eenternational comity also, eh?"

"The warship? Oh, yes, you mean the *Capricornia*, I suppose. Well, you see, she was at Ponce, only a few hours away, and it is quite natural her commander should wish to run over for a call. I should have informed your Excellency before, but circumstances prevented, you know."

"Ye-es, I see. And ven dose she airrive?"

"Oh, any time to-morrow, I suppose. She will salute the castle, of course, and we shall thus be informed in season."

"Vell, Señor Consool, dat ees all. I vill now go."

"But your Excellency has omitted one important matter, which I feel it my duty to call to your attention."

"Ah, ze boy. Ver' vell, but not to-night, Señor Consool, — *mañana*, — to-morrow!"

"No, Señor Presidente. No 'mañana' business for me, if you please. I want those boys released and in this consulate to-night!"

"Eempossible. Aiverybody on duty have go to bed, dey is asleep."

"Not quite everybody, your Excellency. *We* are awake!"

"Ah, dat ees so. You are ver' vide awake. Vell, geeve me ze pen."

"Here is an order ready written. I took the liberty —"

"Um — urr! You have take many leeberty, Señor Consool. But dis ees ze last!"

"As you please, Señor Presidente, so the boys get *their* liberty!"

"There, I have sign. Now, ven arrives de gunboat?"

"At daybreak, to-morrow, your Excellency. Just in time to celebrate the boys' freedom and your birthday!"

"My birthday? Ah, so eet ees. You have good memory, Señor Consool."

The President was evidently touched by the Consul's thoughtfulness, and as he rose to leave, he added, "*Amigo mio* — my friend — you vill find ze boy all right. Zey have been vell cared about. Adios. You vill geeve my compleement to ze commandair. Adios."

VII.

How a Revolution was Averted.

THERE was another tumult outside the house as the President appeared, mounted his horse, and rode away. Then the noise subsided, and when the crowd had gone the great door of the consulate was thrown open and a little procession filed out. It was headed by the Consul and Vice-consul, and closely following them were four servants, each pair bearing a litter, the rear-guard being constituted of the consular clerk and Sam, the office boy.

They took the street leading direct to the castle, and within ten minutes they were at the door of the prison. As a full moon shone in the sky, there was no need of artificial lights, and when the new jailer put his head out in answer to the summons, he saw at a glance who his visitors were and made no protest against their entrance. He took and read the President's order, threw open the door, and led the way to the cell in which the boys were sleeping.

The Consul was cool and apparently unperturbed, though his heart was beating wildly for fear that during his long absence something might have happened to the prisoners. But when he saw that they were

sleeping quietly on beds of clean straw, and was met by the doctor whom he had despatched to them in the morning, he was immediately reassured. He grasped the latter's hand, and asked after his patients.

"They are better than they were when I came," said the doctor, "and with care will soon get well. And I am glad you have come, not only for their sake, but my own, for the air here is very bad, and the cell is damp."

"You are very good to stay by them," said the Consul. "I had hardly expected you to go this length, Doctor."

"*Caramba!* neither did I intend to stay; but the fact is, I was compelled to. Lelee wouldn't let me out, — or his jailer wouldn't, acting under his orders. They say that when he learned of my visit, he raved and tore like a madman. The worst of it was that I had to stay and be an unwilling witness to the former jailer's execution. He was a worthless fellow, as we all know, but he had grit, and when the sentence was read to him, he went along without a word of protest. He seemed to have but one anxiety, Consul, and that was about some money that, he said, you owed him. Five dollars, I believe, which he desired me to ask you to give his old mother. He gave me a like sum, and I agreed to see that she got it. Then he thanked me, said good-by, and went off to his death without a tremor."

"Poor fellow!" said the Consul, sadly. "There

was good in him, after all. I will see that his mother is paid the money, and I will also have an eye to her comfort hereafter while I am in the city. Well, can we take these boys over to the consulate?"

"Yes, Consul, with care. They must be taken out of this terrible place, at any rate. The elder of the two is not so badly hurt, but the younger has suffered internal injury, I fear, and will need much nursing before he gets on his feet again. There, now, bring the litters up close and we will lift them on. Gently, my men, one on each side. That's right; now carry them carefully. Good! Ah, how glad I am to get out of this vile den!"

"It was hard for you, Doctor, that's a fact — to make you a prisoner, too. If I had not had my hands so full during the day, I should have looked you up; but that was impossible."

"Oh, it's all right, I suppose," replied the doctor, dubiously. "I really don't mind the short term of imprisonment at all; but the worst of it is that Lelee now has me marked for future trouble. He never forgets a thing of this sort. It is true, I myself might fly the country, but there are wife and family to be considered. They would have to suffer in my place, and so I shall stay and face it. I fear —"

"Sh!" exclaimed the Vice-consul, plucking the doctor by the sleeve; "don't say any more, every word will get to Lelee!" For the consular clerk and the jailer were listening with open ears, drinking in

every word that was said. The latter grinned as the Consul dropped a couple of dollars into his hand, but said nothing until he had closed the door upon the party; then he muttered to himself: —

"They think they have beaten Lelee at his own game, but they don't know Lelee. Perhaps I may live to see them all here again, — if *I* don't get shot. Those boys will come back, anyway. When the eagle gets after his prey he won't let it be taken away without another try. I pity the prey, that's all." And he shook his head menacingly, as he barred the great door and shuffled off.

The little party of rescue returned through the silent, moonlit streets to the consulate, arriving at which the boys were put to bed, given a little light refreshment, and told to keep quiet and give themselves no further uneasiness, as they were now in absolute security.

"Not a word," said the Consul, with a warning shake of his finger, as they tried to tell him how grateful they were. "Not a word. Go to sleep, and show us how glad you are to be here by getting well as fast as you can."

After the doctor had gone home and the attendants had been dismissed, the Consul and his trusted friend, Santos, sat long into the night discussing the situation. "Well," said the latter, after they had been left alone with their lemonade and cigars, "you euchred the old gentleman quite neatly, Don En-

rique, and he retired with good grace. But you don't for a moment imagine he has given up the fight, do you?"

"Not I," replied the Consul. "In fact, I consider the fight, as you call it, only just begun. But I've unmasked his batteries, and shown the weak points in his defensive works, which is something gained. Now, in order to follow up the advantage, do you know what I shall do next? No? Well, you noted how pleased he was that I had remembered his birthday? That shows he is not altogether bad, and I have an idea he can even feel grateful at times. Now the chief object in sending for the warship is already accomplished without her assistance, but we have got to invent some excuse for her coming here, haven't we? Yes, you know we have, or else the people will get suspicious, then excited, and the first thing Lelee knows he will have a first-class revolution on his hands. And he knows it, too; so I am going to help him out of the difficulty by turning the whole affair into a grand demonstration in his honor! It will be given out to-morrow that the warship has come over to salute one whom my government delights to honor, don't you see? That is, there will be a grand salute in the morning, a parade in the afternoon, and a ball at night, — all on account of the President's birthday! How is that?"

"Well, Don Enrique, I always thought you were cut out for a diplomat; but, by my kingdom, you

ought to be a minister plenipotentiary at a European court. But have you counted the cost of the thing? It will be just awful!"

"I know," rejoined the Consul, with a sigh. "It will cost something, but I don't see any other way out of it. It's the penalty I must pay for my rashness in sending for the ship. I might just as well have carried the affair through single-handed, perhaps. And the bother of it all is that I've already spent my year's salary. Uncle Sam is a niggardly old fellow when it comes to salaries, you know."

"Don't I, though? He is the meanest, most parsimonious employer on the face of the earth. And there is no need, either; he might just as well be generous. But he never will be, I fear."

The Vice-consul spoke feelingly, for he was doing work for which any other employer than "Uncle Sam" would have paid him liberally, and receiving merely a pittance. So he, too, sighed, and they both indulged in a long, sympathetic smoke before trusting themselves to speech again, for the subject was a very tender one to broach.

"Still, I couldn't have done less than I have," said the Consul, musingly. "The cost is nothing, compared with the result achieved."

"Nothing at all," said the Vice-consul, reassuringly. "Those young countrymen of yours are nice-looking boys and far too good to be served up on the altar of Lelee's unholy ambitions. I wonder what he has

against them, by the way? They couldn't be guilty of the crimes he imputes to them? One look at their faces tells me that. They have good, wholesome countenances, honest as daylight; and it would be actually impossible for either of them to commit a wrong, I am sure."

"You are right, Santos. A pair of cleaner, purer-minded young men I have never met. Just how they incurred Lelee's wrath I don't know, but probably they have thwarted some pet scheme of his or have discovered something he doesn't want the public to know. We will catechize them to-morrow, if they are well enough to stand the ordeal, and find out what the matter is. Meanwhile, Santos, *mio*, don't you think we had better seek our beds and prepare for the morrow? I suppose you have your man on the watch for the warship, so that we may be prepared to receive her without delay. Yes? Well, then, good night. Come around early in the morning."

Now that the two friends have retired, and while they are sleeping, it might be well to take advantage of this lull in the storm to transport ourselves out to sea, where we can watch for the coming of the *Capricornia*. For she is coming, of course, as the Consul had the word of her commander that she would come, without delay. And when Commander Davis of the *Capricornia* gave his word, either verbally or by cable, rest assured that it would be honored.

Imagine yourselves, then, at a point on the south coast of Santo Domingo between the island of Saona and the river Ozama, time about three in the morning, weather clear, sky starlit, and a waning moon just dropping down behind the land where it showed black against the sky. The great engines of the ship are pulsating slowly, a cloud of black smoke is trailing behind the stacks, and the waves are swishing gently against the bow. On deck there are watchers in various parts, and on the bridge is the commander himself, consulting with his sailing-master as to their exact location.

"We ought to see Ozama light very soon, sir," said the sailing-master; "for we are now off Macoris, and the distance beyond isn't great. Ah, there she is, sir, just twinkling off the weather bow; now we can head her up a bit, sir, if you say so."

"All right, Mr. Jones, bring her up a trifle. The shore is clean about here, I believe, and there are no reefs or shoals. But we will keep her on half-speed, all the same, so as to fetch off the mouth of the river by daylight."

Just at that moment an officer came up, saluted his superior, and reported: "Small boat, sir, just abeam. Seems to want to speak us, near as I can make out, sir."

The commander looked in the direction indicated through his night-glass, then reached out and pulled the signal to the engineer: "Slow up!" The bell

tinkled far below, down where the furnace fires were roaring and the heat was something terrific; where the reeking stokers, stripped to the waist, were shovelling coal beneath the boilers, and the alert engineer was standing at his post. The great engines throbbed more slowly, and finally almost came to a standstill, as the engineer threw over the levers, in obedience to the commander's signal.

"Ahoy the ship!" came up from the small boat dancing on the swell caused by the steamer's propeller.

"Ahoy below! What is it?"

"I'm the cable operator at the city, come off to warn you that a revolution has broken out there; American Consul in jail, and a bobbery kicked up generally. With your permission, Commodore, I'd like to go aboard."

VIII.

All on Account of "Old Glory."

"ALL right, come aboard. Officer, clear the gangway. Throw the man a rope. Drop his boat astern. There you are. Now what is it?"

The cable operator scrambled up the rope ladder that was thrown over the side of the ship, and as soon as he reached the rail was assisted over and marched up to the bridge, where, in answer to the last question, he told his story: how he had received a message over the wire from the Vice-consul, etc., all of which we know. Having already had a taste of Lelee's methods, and having been once in peril of his life through misplaced confidence in the President, he had acted promptly on the Consul's advice to get out, and after briefly informing his fellow-operator in Porto Rico of his intention, had locked the door of his hut, borrowed a boat, and set himself adrift in the supposed path of the ship. That was all he could tell, and the commander was as mystified as ever, so he knew not whether to clear ship for action, or sail in cautiously and land for orders. He chose the latter course, however, and soon after daylight the loungers about the wharves saw a gallant

ship of the United States Navy steam slowly up the river, anchor off the castle, and send a boat ashore filled with marines. The boat was commanded by an experienced officer, and the marines were armed to the teeth.

"Seems quiet enough on shore just now, lieutenant," said the officer to his assistant, as they neared the wharf. "There is nothing in sight we can't take care of, anyway; so we'll go slowly. Have the bow gun ready, but don't make any demonstration."

"Give me half a dozen men," said the lieutenant, "and I'll take a stroll up to the consulate. If they've got any big guns trained on us, they aren't visible,—that's sure. And come to think of it, I don't believe there's a gun on the island big enough to knock the legs off an iron pot; or if there is, it has been purchased and mounted since we were here last. Here we are."

"Stern all! Tumble out, men. That's enough. Form in loose order and look lively. Line up, there. Forward march. Hello, there comes Don Santos, the Vice-consul. Know him well. Good fellow, too. Look here, Santos, what's the row about? Thought you were in jail."

"Not I," replied Santos. "It's all a mistake. But we are glad you came, just the same. Lelee had us at a disadvantage, as he thought, but we practised a bit of strategy on him, and here we are—or at least here I am—and the Consul is safe in his office."

"That's good, so far; but hope you didn't send for us on a wild goose chase. The 'old man' will be wrathy, I tell you. It's no joke, you know, getting up steam and leaving a good port like Ponce to come over into this infernal roadstead. If a sou'-west wind comes up the sea is mighty nasty, let me tell you."

"Right you are, sir. But we didn't intend anything out of the way. Wouldn't have cabled you without a cause, surely." Then Santos told the officer all about the trouble, and he was mollified so far as to agree with the Vice-consul that perhaps they had done the best they could, under the circumstances. He sent the boat back with a report to the commander, accepted an invitation from Santos to join him and his superior at breakfast at the consulate, and the two walked off together, arm in arm.

It would take too much space to narrate in detail all the eventful happenings of that day. How the Consul made a formal call on the commander, how the commander made a formal call on the Consul, and then both together made a formal visit to the palace, after which Lelee and his cabinet all went aboard the warship, while the guns roared a President's salute, which was returned with an admiral's salute from the rusty old cannon mounted on the castle walls. It was, as the Vice-consul remarked, all "honey and hug," the whole day through, and the ceremonials, the salutes, the festivities in general,

and the ball at night in honor of Lelee's birthday in particular, all went to show the islanders what a truly great man their President was — in the estimation of the outside powers, and served to strengthen his hold on them more than any amount of bluster and proclamations could have done. He was not slow to perceive this, either, and was very gracious to the Consul and his staff, even going so far as to hint that an apology would be forthcoming for his acts; but he rather resented the suggestion that compensation in the form of a substantial indemnity was due the victims of his malice. The Consul consulted with the boys about this, and told them that if they but gave the word he would enforce a claim for indemnity then and there, as after the warship was gone they might just as well whistle for the wind. But they were both opposed to such a proceeding, declaring that all they wanted was to be let alone and allowed the privilege of roaming over the island at will. "If we can only carry out our scheme," said the elder of the two, "we can get all the compensation we want, and shall be perfectly satisfied."

The Consul did not press them, and though he was curious to know the nature of their mission, which they were so confident would be so remunerative, he did not say any more at that time. He had all he wanted to do, in fact, in attending to the business of the day: in entertaining his numerous guests, in setting the great ball in motion, and finally in pacifying

the commander, who was at first disposed to resent being called upon to appear in the rôle of intermediary in such a small affair, as he regarded it. After the ball was over and, with a few of his officers, he revisited the consulate for a parting chat before going on board his ship, he said to the Consul: —

"Well, Mr. Garland, you have used us as your cat's-paw to draw these Yankee chestnuts out of the fire; but it was hardly fair in you to cable us such an alarming message, it appears to me."

"Alarming message, sir? Well, I don't know. I merely cabled the exact state of affairs as it seemed to me then."

"Yes? Did you, though? Why, according to the code words, you had yourself and the Vice-consul in jail, a revolution raging, and the deuce to pay generally."

"What? No. Here, Sam, bring me the code-book. There now, here are the words: 'Bismuth, bicarbonate, bobolink, Bulgaria.'"

"Which, being interpreted, mean: 'A revolution is raging, all Americans in jail, hasten quickly or may be too late, in imminent peril!'" roared the commander, ending up his indictment with a peal of laughter in which all present, even the discomfited Consul, had to join.

"I believe you are right," he admitted; "but to tell the truth, things were coming to a climax so fast, I may not have stopped to pick my words."

"It's 'one on you' — or rather on us," interjected the Vice-consul.

"That's what it is," rejoined the commander. "But no matter. It would have been my duty to come over if things hadn't been half so bad as you made them out. An American's life was in jeopardy, — that was enough; and if the distance had been ten times as great, I should have done my best to be on time. What's the good of a navy, anyway, if it is not to be used to enforce respect for the flag, in whatever portion of the globe it may float? Why, it was not long ago that even little Chile, down in South America, took a notion to insult it, and there were some Americans who advised letting her fume; and the result was that our sailors were attacked and some of them killed. By promptly despatching a few warships down that way, the arrogant little republic was brought to her senses, and she has been quite civil ever since. No, gentlemen; the Consul made no mistake. He is here to protect his countrymen in need of protection; we are here to enforce his demands. He did just right!"

"Three cheers for Consul Garland!" spoke up a junior officer. All present rose and were about to give them, when the Consul raised his hand, requesting a moment's silence.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am deeply touched by the remarks of our commander, and feel greatly flattered that he should approve my course. But,

gentlemen, I am only a servant of that great Republic which we all have the honor to serve. It is a blessed privilege, I feel, merely to be an American, a citizen of the United States; and, above all, it is a glorious thing to assist in upholding the prestige of the flag. Gentlemen, I propose three cheers for 'Old Glory.' May its galaxy of stars shine on undimmed forever!"

Three thunderous cheers were given that nearly "raised the roof," and after that more toasts were proposed, and more friendships cemented, until, by the time the visitors were ready to return to their ship, the morning star had risen and another day had dawned.

Before they left, Commander Davis drew the Consul aside and asked if he could see his protégés, who had been the cause of his coming to the island.

"Of course," replied the Consul. "They are not out of bed yet, on account of the mauling they got in the castle; but it isn't likely they have slept much through all this noise. You ought to see them, certainly, for without you and your ship as lever and fulcrum, it is hardly possible I should have been able to pry the President off his high and lofty perch. Come upstairs, and we will have a short talk with them."

The Consul was right in the surmise that his patients had not slept through the tumult going on below, and he found them wide awake, their eyes

shining with excitement. They were overjoyed at meeting the commander, and he expressed pleasure at having been of assistance to them in their emergency; but when, in the midst of their thanks, he offered to take them on board his ship and give them free transportation back to the United States, they positively, though politely, refused to avail themselves of it.

"We wouldn't go back," said the elder — and the younger nodded assent — "if you were to offer us the ship! We have come down here for a certain purpose, and we intend to stay until it is accomplished. That is," he added, looking shyly at the Consul, "if the good friend who saved our lives does not interpose his veto to our plans."

"Not I," declared the Consul. "You shall stay as long as you like, shall go wherever you like, and can count on me for assistance whenever you get into another tight place, as I have no doubt you will, soon as you can. But one thing is certain: You won't get away into the mountains again in a hurry, let me tell you."

"What?" asked the boys, in unison. "Who told you we had been in the mountains?" They appeared more disturbed by this remark of their friend than by all the events of the preceding weeks of terror.

"Sh—! Don't get excited, my boys. Perhaps a little bird told me. Perhaps, again, I have the *missing clew* for which you were searching when

Lelee's minions overtook and arrested you. Anyway, we will work together, when you have recovered — that is, if you will allow me to be silent partner and accept a little advice now and then. I shan't charge anything for my services. But all in good time, my lads. Don't worry. To-morrow we will have a good, long talk. Till then, rest."

The boys looked at each other perplexed and mystified. Had the Consul guessed their secret? They could not believe it; at the same time they feared he had. But his cheery smile reassured them, as he and the commander took their departure, the latter after a warm pressure of their hands and reiterating his offer of service if they should ever need him again. "Don't hesitate to call on the Consul for help, and he will send for me at once. He has a cable code warranted to fetch me every time. Eh, Consul?" he added, giving that worthy a slap on the shoulder.

"I hope you don't think I did it just for fun," retorted the Consul, with a wry face, as he thought of the dreadful havoc the warship's coming had made with his salary.

"Not at all; not at all," rejoined the commander; "I know better. But good-by; we're off."

In another hour the *Capricornia* was out on the open sea.

IX.

How the Lost Clew was Recovered.

THE week that followed the advent and departure of the warship was remarkably quiet, and no one would have imagined that only the week before the capital was trembling on the brink of a revolution. There was no noticeable difference in the attitude of the people toward the Consul, excepting that they treated him with increased respect. It had got about, somehow, that he had brought the hitherto invincible Lelee to his knees, had beaten him out and out in a little game of diplomacy, as well as forced his hand when it came to an appeal to arms.

That was what caused the difference in their behavior, for they had, up to that time, considered their great President as the biggest man in the world. As their government had never been attacked by an outside power — that is, within the memory of any living persons — and as Lelee had given out that he and his army could "conquer the world" without half trying, they had firmly believed him. They still clung to the belief that the outside barbarians would have a difficult proposition should they ever attack

their brave nation; but it tickled their fancy, just the same, to find their despotic ruler humiliated.

As for the President, he also held his foe to be more worthy of his admiration, and as the latter had salved his wounds with fulsome flattery, he had no grudge against him. The Consul still held possession of his one-time prisoners, to be sure, and he knew they would never be given into his keep again without a struggle. It would be vain for him to attempt to match him with force, for the Consul's reserves were too strong. So he set his wits to work — and he had a full measure of cunning in his composition — to compass the dearest desire of his heart: the destruction of these two boys, whom he chose to consider his enemies.

It is impossible to account for his hallucination, — of course it was nothing else, — for an evil man's heart is inscrutable in its workings. When once the devil has possession of a man, there is no knowing what deeps of iniquity he will fathom to accomplish his unhallowed purposes. At this stage of the story his reasons have not disclosed themselves; but perhaps they may develop later. Of this much we may be certain, he would not rest until he had again re-ensnared his prey; and though he pretended to have overlooked what had transpired, nothing was farther from his thoughts than that.

But the boys were for the time safe from harm, in the care of one who had shown himself resourceful

and alert; so it will not be necessary to concern ourselves with their arch-enemy's scheming, but to attend more closely to their immediate fortunes. During the week, they had fully recovered their strength, and seemed but little the worse for their misadventure. And when they were on their legs again and able to get about, the Consul sprang upon them a surprise he had been preparing during their convalescence.

They had held many conversations together in the week previous, and between them had grown up a mutual confidence. But there was yet a certain reserve, something the boys refused to divulge, respecting their motive in coming to the island and what they expected to do when they were well enough to leave the Consul's hospitable dwelling. They talked freely enough of their home and the few friends they had left there, and the Consul had learned that, like himself, they were natives of New England, Americans by right of birth and a pretty long line of ancestry.

The name of the elder boy was Arthur, and the younger, Hartley, Strong. Their parents were dead, and they had been left when quite young to fight life's battle unaided. Arthur was eighteen and his brother sixteen years of age; but from having been thrown upon their own resources and thrust forth into the world to battle for a living very early in life, they had an air of manliness and self-reliance beyond their years.

It may have been owing to this habit they had acquired of self-dependence that they were so reserved, for surely they had no reason to distrust one who, like the Consul, had proved their friend at a time when they most stood in need of one. But though they chatted quite freely of their home life, the Consul could never bring them to talk of their adventures since leaving the land of their birth. He had no mere curiosity as to this matter, but — as the sequel will divulge — was rather amused by their reticence, and only persisted in his attempts to make them betray their secret because he held it himself.

This was the surprise he had in store for them, and at the proper time he let it out. They were all seated on the back veranda of the consulate, near the close of a very hot day, watching some birds playing in the waters of a fountain in the court. A great group of bananas sent broad pennons up into the air in a corner of the court. The cocoa palms held their rigid leaves almost motionless, awaiting the coming of the evening breeze, and all nature breathed of peace and beauty. The boys were admiring the scene before them, their attention being divided between the birds plashing in the fountain basin, the beautiful bananas and palms, and the ruined walls of an ancient monastery, behind which the sun was sinking into the sea.

At last the Consul spoke: "My boys, I have a little story to tell! It may be true, or merely a ro-

mance, but you shall judge. A few weeks ago, it may have been a month, or two months, — that doesn't matter, — two young men were landed on the north coast of this island, from a Yankee schooner that had come down here to trade off codfish and lumber for mahogany and tobacco. They were dropped off, I was told, at or near the ruined city of Isabella, where Columbus founded the first European settlement in America, in 1493. Whether their incentive was sentiment, or a desire for historical information, I do not know ; but my informant said it was both, and also a hope of finding concealed treasure, or a gold mine of some sort. However that may be, they spent more than a week at that spot, and ransacked the ruins thoroughly in search of whatever they expected to find, then set off for the interior of the island.

"But what is the matter? You are both pale as ghosts. Are you feeling ill again? No? Then shall I proceed? Very well. These young men — mere boys, in fact, inexperienced and knowing very little of the island or the language spoken here — started boldly for the mountains which they saw from the coast. They had a stock of provisions which they carried in knapsacks on their backs, a gold-miner's outfit, a gun, revolvers, hatchet, and of course a jack-knife apiece — being Yankee boys — and I suppose some money for necessary expenses. But they had no guide of any sort, except an old book, a his-

tory or biography, or something of that kind, which they seemed to think was going to lead them straight to the ancient gold mines of Cibao, for which Columbus was always looking. A good many natives saw them, but as they were regarded merely as crazy men they did not molest them, that being against their principles. Finally they reached the mountains, and passed over the very trail made by Columbus and his army when they searched for the golden country four hundred years ago. It is called the Hidalgo's Pass, because the road through it was opened by the noblemen and soldiers of high degree who came out with Columbus, you know. Perhaps you may have seen it, and —"

"Consul, what do you mean by this? Where did you get all this information about us?" It was Arthur who spoke, or else it was Hartley, or both together; but, anyway, both rose to their feet and looked at their friend in great astonishment and much confusion.

"About you, my dear boys? Who said this story was to be about you? Why, you haven't told me a single thing respecting what happened to you since you landed here. How could the story concern you, anyway?"

"Why, it — it — seems very queer, Consul; but go on," faltered Arthur.

"I will, if you will not interrupt me again. Well, as I was saying, these two boys went through the

Hidalgo's Pass into the valley of the Yaqui, which is the very river, by the way, in which Columbus found the first gold ever taken from America to Spain. Some of it, in fact, adorns some pictures in an old monastery at Burgos, and it is said that a portion of it was used in illuminating Queen Isabella's missal, still to be seen in the city of Granada. But excuse me these digressions; as you seem interested in the tale, I will hasten to the end of it. In short, these two young rascals went on up the valley of the Rio del Oro—as the Spaniards called it, the River of Gold—and having reached a point in the hills near its head waters, they branched off on a tributary and brought up on or near the site of the first fort ever erected in the mountains for guarding the gold regions against the Indians. It was called Santo Tomas, and was at one time defended by that hair-brained adventurer, Alonzo de Ojeda, who had a pretty time holding out against Caonabo, the Cacique of the Golden Mountains, as he was called.

"Dear me, there I go again, switching off into historical subjects; but you see I am deeply interested in them and have been over most of the ground. In fact, boys, I have hunted for those same gold-fields that you — I mean they — barely missed discovering. Wait, now," protested the Consul, as both boys sprang to their feet with questions quivering on their lips. "I know what you want to ask. You want to know how it was you missed the golden treasure. I mean,

how those two boys, whose adventures I have been narrating, missed it, rather. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, yes," they cried eagerly. "Tell us how we — they — came so near as to almost find it and then lost it utterly. Why," continued Arthur, "we came within an ace of it, I'm sure; but there was one important clew that we couldn't follow because — because — "

"Ho ho! Then you two were those boys, after all? You say 'we.' "

"Of course we were, Consul, and you know it, too. But what we should like to know is, how you got the story."

"How? Oh, let me see. Just as you were about to strike the trail, in fact, as it got very warm, as the hunters say, a posse of black men pounced upon you and dragged you off to this city and to jail!"

"Yes, Consul, all happened exactly as you say. We should have told you, only — only — " Arthur Strong was a truthful boy, and so was Hartley, and as they did not like to give the real reasons for having been so secretive, they looked at each other in perplexity, but kept silent.

"Oh, well," said the Consul, with a laugh. "You didn't tell me because you didn't want to, and that is sufficient. But now, as to how I got the story of your adventures. If you will only recall by whose soldiers you were arrested, perhaps you may draw an inference pretty near the truth."

"What, the President? Did you get it from him?"

"Exactly. From his Excellency the President."

"But how did he know of our doings previous to reaching the scene of our arrest?" demanded Arthur.

"How did he know? Why, by means of his spies, of course. He had a man dogging your footsteps from the day you landed on the coast, watching you in camp when you slept, ready at any time to do his bidding, even to murder, if need be. And that reminds me — speaking of spies — that I haven't seen my clerk around here the last hour or so. He is probably ensconced in some convenient corner listening to all we say. Well, let him; but if he repeats a word to his master, I'll break every bone in his body. Let him look out!

"That's for his benefit," said the Consul, with a grim smile. "Now come here and let me whisper what I dare not say aloud: I have the clew which was almost in your hands when you were arrested! Sh! not a word. When the proper time comes we will put this and that together, and find that treasure yet, or I'm greatly mistaken!"

X.

After Four Hundred Years.

"HOW do you feel to-day, boys," asked the Consul, as the trio sat at breakfast, the morning after the conversation reported in the preceding chapter. "Well enough to take a walk?"

"Yes, indeed, I feel perfectly well," said Arthur. "And I," said Hartley, "except that my lungs pain me a little. But a walk will do me good, I'm sure."

"That's right," said their friend, cheerily. "I like you two because you are always ready to do the best you can. Now of course you don't feel as chipper as you might; but you're a long ways better off than dead men. Anyway, you will be able to take a short stroll about the city with me, I'm quite certain. This old city, as you know, or ought to know, is the most ancient in America. That is, leaving out the ruined cities, such as those of Yucatan, Peru, etc., which are no longer inhabited. But aside from desiring to acquaint you with its antiquities, I have a purpose in view which will be revealed in due time, or when we reach the tomb of Columbus, in the ancient cathedral. So get your hats, and we'll set forth at once."

It should be said that the Consul and his friends were at "coffee," rather than at breakfast, for the latter is a solid meal usually eaten about midday, while they were merely taking a cup of coffee and eating a few crackers, or biscuit, at six in the morning. At half-past six all were ready, and a few minutes later were in the street, seeking the shady side of it, for even at that early hour the heat of the sun was terrific. In fact, the morning hours between an hour after daybreak and about nine o'clock are usually the hottest in the West Indies; for the land breeze, which blows all night, has died away, and the sea breeze, which blows all day, has not become strong enough to have any effect in cooling the air.

"As you may not be here many more days," said the Consul, as they walked along, "I am going to show you all our great lions this morning, ending with the old cathedral. For the last few days you have been looking at the ruined walls of that old monastery behind the consulate, as you sat on the veranda; but you may not have known that it was probably the first of the kind in America, founded by the Franciscans, and that within it were buried the remains of Don Bartholomew Columbus, brother of Christopher, and the gallant Alonzo de Ojeda. Yes, that old monastery is interesting, but here" — they had then arrived opposite the sculptured façade of a well-preserved church that yet bore traces of great antiquity — "here is the very first that was

started in America. This is the church of Santo Domingo, formerly the monastery where the noble Bartholomew de las Casas, the friend of the Indians, once lived for several years."

They went through the court and saw before them immense heaps of fallen stones, the ruins of massive walls. "This," continued the Consul, "is the last vestige of — what do you suppose? Well, you can't guess, if you don't know. Here before you is all that remains of the *first university ever founded in America.* Here Las Casas taught, here some of the persecuted Indians whom he rescued were given an education, and here he wrote a good deal of that great work which has lasted centuries, his 'History of the Indies,' a book to which all historians since his time have been compelled to go for material on the West Indies.

"Think over that, my boys, for it is something to have seen a few 'first' things, such as this the first university, the city of Isabella, — which you have already visited, and — well, the first castle erected in America, in which you have been incarcerated, the old Homenage. You won't forget that in a hurry, I fancy!"

The Consul had intended nothing more than a humorous allusion to their imprisonment, but the instant he noted the swift look of pain that came into their eyes at mention of their prison-house, he quickly changed the subject.

"But pardon me, boys, that wasn't a very happy thought, I must confess. Come now to the old cathedral. The west door is always open, and we can get in, even at this early hour. And we shan't find our great and good friend, the President, at his devotions, either, — at least not there.

"Do you know," he added in a low tone, glancing around to feel sure he was not overheard by any passer-by, "they say Lelee is a voudou worshipper. That is, he sometimes goes up into the mountains of Haiti and sits at the shrine of the serpent. The African serpent worship was brought here by the negro slaves, and along with it the habit of eating human flesh, or of cannibalism. Now, I don't say that his Excellency goes to that extent in his devotion to voudou; but there are those who declare that they wouldn't dare trust him.

"Well, here we are. Isn't this a grand old pile? Three hundred and fifty years have gone by since this cathedral was founded. Under the tiles of the roof outside is lodged a cannon-ball fired from one of Sir Francis Drake's war vessels; and Drake was here — when was it, now, can you tell me?"

"He was here in 1586, when he sacked the city and carried away a vast sum of money, and again in 1595, shortly before he died, on his last voyage," said Hartley. "That is what I have read."

"Exactly," rejoined the Consul, "and even those events alone carry us back to the days of Queen

Elizabeth; but this city itself was founded in 1496, and the cathedral fifty years after. So you see it is what we might call rather ancient. Look over there into that chapel. The great mahogany cross you see there, which is nine feet high, was the first one set up on the site of this cathedral, and was made in 1512. Beneath the pavement of the nave, somewhere near this very spot, is the tomb of Oviedo, royal historiographer of the Indies, who died in 1557. That beautifully sculptured tomb in yonder chapel is equally ancient, and in fact nearly everything here antedates the oldest structure in the United States by more than a hundred years."

They had by this time traversed the grand nave and were in front of the high altar, at one side of which, near the right wall of the presbytery, the Consul pointed out a slab of white marble on which was an engraved inscription picked out with black lettering. "Read," said the Consul. "This inscription is in Spanish, but I guess you can make it out."

Their knowledge of Spanish was equal to this task, and Arthur read the inscription aloud: "Beneath this marble is the vault from which were taken the remains of the most noble Don Christopher Columbus, Lord High Admiral of the Ocean Sea, who died in Valladolid, Spain, in 1506, was interred in the convent of Las Cuevas in Seville, and about the year 1540 was brought over the sea and placed beneath the pavement of this presbytery, where his

remains were rediscovered in the year 1867. Requiescat in pace."

"Why, I thought the remains of Columbus were interred in the cathedral at Havana, Cuba," said Hartley.

"Yes; and so almost everybody thought, until after this famous re-discovery," replied the Consul. "But the truth is, they were not."

"Then how has the impression become general, at least, among historical writers, that Columbus was buried there?"

"Well, it is a long story," answered the Consul. "There is no doubt at all that the remains of Columbus were brought to this island of Santo Domingo, about three hundred and fifty or sixty years ago; but after a while the place of his sepulchre was lost sight of, owing, they say, to the fact that when the pirate Drake was reported headed for the island, the church dignitaries ordered all traces of the tomb to be obliterated, fearing desecration. It remained unknown until it was re-located in 1867, as stated on the slab. But the way in which the impression got abroad that he was at last buried in Havana was simple enough. In the year 1795 this island was ceded by Spain to France, but it was thought too bad to allow the ashes of the great discoverer of America, and of one who had done so much for the glory of Spain, to rest under an alien flag; so a frigate was sent to transport them to Havana. As

no one knew the exact burial place, only that it was somewhere in the cathedral, the commissioners charged with this office sounded the pavement till they located a 'boveda,' or vault, then opened it and took out some pieces of lead and fragments of bone that were there. They found no inscription whatever, but had no doubt that what they took away were the remains of Columbus, and they were placed in a niche in the cathedral at Havana, and for more than eighty years it was thought all right.

"But one day some masons were repairing the wall of this presbytery and came across a vault containing a leaden casket. They reported the fact to the vicar of the cathedral, and he summoned all the city authorities, and all the foreign consuls, myself included, to witness the official opening of the vault, which he had every reason to believe contained the remains of Columbus. And sure enough it did, for when the leaden casket was opened there were not only the remains, such as human bones and dust, but inscriptions authenticating them as veritable relics of the great navigator himself. There was also a silver plate with his name engraved thereon, a big bullet which it is supposed was shot into his body when he was in Africa before he made the voyage to America, and a few other trifles of the sort. No, there is no doubt these were the remains of Don Christopher, and those taken to Havana belonged to some other member of his family, prob-

ably his son, Don Diego, the same man who built your castle."

"That is poetic justice," said Arthur, though not without wincing at this allusion again to his prison pen; "for he had probably hoped to make himself a name by building it, and as it turns out all trace of him is finally lost. But was there anything else in the casket, Consul, that would throw light on the subject, or upon the acts of Columbus during his lifetime?"

The Consul looked at his interlocutor with a strange smile on his face for a moment, then replied: "Yes, my boy, there was. But come back with me now to the consulate, where we can talk in privacy, and I'll tell you all about it. In fact, you will be more interested in that than you can at present understand. It was not merely to show you antiquarian relics that I took you boys out with me this morning, but to have you see for yourselves the exact spot in which I found the lost clew to the treasure."

"What?" cried both boys at once. "The clew? In this vault?"

"That's what I said. But come along; not another word here. Come."

Arriving at the consulate, their friend took Arthur and Hartley up to his private room, and after closing the door and examining the windows, he went to a corner and unlocked a huge chest that stood there. He fumbled awhile among the articles contained

within it and then drew forth a chamois-skin bag, from which he took out a small plate of metal, about four inches square, thin and tarnished. Procuring a magnifying lens he handed both plate and glass to Arthur, and requested him to read what he should find engraved on the plate. The boy complied, while Hartley stood wondering by. At first he seemed puzzled; then his face began to pale, his hand shook so that he could hardly keep the lens at the right focus. But he persisted in the reading until he had finished it, then turned to the Consul with a sigh, as he handed plate and lens to his brother, with the ejaculation:—

"Wonderful! Wonderful! To think this secret should have been preserved four hundred years!"

The effect of the reading upon Hartley was not less marked, for he seemed stupefied, deprived of speech, and simply looked with dilated eyes from the objects in his hand to his companion.

XI.

Through a Dead Man's Eyes.

"I found that plate in the Columbus casket," said the Consul. "After all the bones had been taken out, I was poking about in the dust with a stick and disclosed this. Nobody had any objection to my taking it away, and so I brought it home with me. That's all there is to the story. Rather queer, though, isn't it?"

The boys were still too much overcome to reply, and the Consul continued: "Suppose you can make out the lettering, can't you? It is rather obscure, to be sure, but still it is legible. Judging by your looks, you must have got an inkling of the inscription, for it seems to have affected you somewhat. Let me read it, though, and see if it tallies with your translation. It was probably left by Columbus on his deathbed, with instructions to have it placed in his coffin. It's a wonder, though, that nobody read it and set out in search of the treasure he mentions. Columbus was queer, and no mistake. Here he must have known of that treasure for many years, and seems to have made no effort whatever to find it. But he was striving for a world, was Columbus, and what were a few millions of treasure to him?

However, here goes. The inscription is in old Spanish, as you may have observed, and hard to make out on that account, even if the lettering were not microscopic.

"'I, Don Cristobal Colon [Spanish for Christopher Columbus, you know], being in extremis and about to leave this world in which I have found naught but sorrow and pain, and desirous of committing to posterity a secret that has been mine for many years, have caused a silver plate to be engraved, and this is it. It is to make known the whereabouts of the treasure of the Cacique of the Golden House, otherwise known as Caonabo, the same Indian chieftain whom I caused to be taken by Alonzo de Ojeda and sent to Spain in chains, and who died of grief, or a broken heart, on the voyage. Heaven rest his soul and ease mine of the weight of this sin!

"'Before he left Isabella city, which I had founded and named after my gracious sovereign, he told me that in the mountains of the Cibao he had filled a vast cave with all the gold his subjects had found in many, many years. He told me that to reach this treasure cave one must pursue the Rio del Oro, or Yaqui, to its branching beyond the Yanico, thence go northwardly for more than a furlong, when a narrow ravine would be found opening out of the stream, and at the head of this ravine was the cave, its entrance hidden by a screen of vines. This the Cacique told me, and it was always my intention to

make search accordingly, as I have no doubt of his truthfulness in the matter. But here am I at last, near to death in Valladolid, worn out from long service in my sovereigns' service, and having no desire for earthly treasure. It is my will, then, that this plate be placed in my coffin, to be buried with me in the island of Santo Domingo, in the convent of the Franciscans in the Vega Real, that whomsoever may find it, in some succeeding century, may receive the benefit of this intention. And may that treasure prove more a blessing to its finder than all that has been yielded to me through my discovery of the Indies, all that I have had being sorrow and distress. Amen.

"'The greeting of Cristobal Colon, one time Admiral of the Ocean Sea, one time the companion and confidant of kings and princes; yet who dieth in poverty and obscurity. Of what avail, O God, of what avail?'

"Well, does that tally with your translation?" asked the Consul.

"Yes," replied Arthur, "I made out the gist of it, enough to show me how near we were to finding that cave when the soldiers seized us. Why, do you know, we were right opposite a deep and narrow ravine, and Hart and I were discussing whether we ought to turn off there or keep on the main stream. The soldiers, concealed in the forest, must have heard us, though they could not have understood, of

course, and before we had decided, out they came and made us prisoners."

"And now I remember," added Hartley, "that Art was for going up the ravine, while I was inclined to keep on the main stream."

"Just so," rejoined the Consul, "and if you had had this clew, bestowed by dead and gone Columbus, you might have gone direct to the cave and long before this have been revelling in untold riches. That is, you might if you hadn't been headed off. I don't believe the soldiers know of the cave or the treasure; but their lord and master, Lelee, must have an inkling of it, or he wouldn't keep them up there in the mountains, perpetually on guard watching for prospectors like yourselves. But by the way, what became of the book upon which you relied for information?"

"It was taken from us," replied Arthur, "as well as everything else we possessed, except the clothes we had on."

"Ah, yes, and that reminds me that I have not made his Excellency disgorge his plunder, either. I will write him a note and suggest that it will be better for him to return it at once. When do you want to start for the mountains again? I suppose you still intend to continue the search?"

The boys looked at each other sadly a moment, and then Arthur said, "Consul, I don't think we shall go there again, but instead will abandon

the search and take the first steamer for the States."

"How now? What has changed your intentions?"

"Well, Consul, our intentions have not changed so much as the conditions. Since you have shown us where the treasure is located, and yourself own the only clew, it would not be fair to take advantage of this knowledge; so there seems but one thing to do, and that is to throw up the whole affair and go back home."

"Pooh, pooh, my boy. You aren't going to do any such thing. I meant what I told you a few days ago; that I would go in with you two as a silent partner, if you like, and while you carry on the search in the field I can keep watch over our enemy here at the capital. What do you say? Is it a bargain? Quick, now, do you close?"

"What shall it be, Hart?" said Arthur, with a laugh.

"Close, by all means, Art. It would nearly break my heart to abandon the search now, before we have fairly started. I know there's risk in it, but that doesn't matter. I'm willing to take it if you are."

"Very well, Consul, it is a bargain. But what shall we do for an outfit? We had a pretty complete one when we were arrested, but now—"

"Give yourself no uneasiness about that. Why, have you forgotten the belt full of gold Arthur had around his waist under his clothes? It seemed pretty

heavy, and I'm willing to take what is in it for my share of the expenses."

"Oh, Consul, Consul. Did you save that for us? Why, I thought the jailer took it while we were unconscious, for when I awoke it was gone."

"Of course it was, for I took it myself, knowing full well that if I didn't some one else would. And I doubt if anybody else would have brought it to me, and asked me to place it in my safe for you; for that's where it is now, and subject to your order."

"Consul, we can never sufficiently thank you for all your kindness, — and then this last! If you will only take half the gold in the belt as some return for the expense we have been to you —"

"Nonsense, boy. You don't know what you are saying. You may pay for your outfit, though, and what is left I'll keep in the safe, if you say so, against the day of need that may come if you don't find the treasure. Then again, you'll need a few dollars with which to bribe the soldiers when they get on your trail; for sure as fate they will. Catch old Lelee napping? No, indeed! Outwit him for a while, but eventually he will catch us, I'm afraid.

"What I propose is that you take passage on the next steamer as if for the United States, and instead of going through, get off at Puerto Plata or Monte Christi, on the north coast, as she touches at both places, on the homeward voyage. You can make your way to the interior from either port, and by the

time Lelee hears of it be so far into the mountains that it will take his hirelings a long time to find you. I expect them to find you eventually, but their master knows that if they do you any bodily harm he will pay for it. The *Sangamon* is due here this week, and as I am well acquainted with the captain and purser I will arrange for your passage. Tickets will be made out for New York, but it will be understood that you step off at Monte Christi. I advise that port because it is farther off than Puerto Plata and less visited. You can go thence up the Yaqui River road direct to the mountains of the Cibao and begin operations where you left off. Does that suit you?"

"Perfectly," replied Arthur, Hartley also assenting, and that very day they began preparations for the journey. With the Consul's aid they got together a complete outfit little by little, and when the steamer arrived they were ready to start. Purser and captain entered cordially into the scheme, and on the homeward voyage of the *Sangamon* the two boys were carried on the passenger list as "Messrs. Arthur and Hartley Strong, bound for New York." The President was not unaware of their departure, but if he had wished to prevent it, he gave no sign.

At the very last moment, and after they had bidden their friend good-by at the consulate (as he had important papers to sign, and said he could not leave to see them aboard), when the steamer had pulled out into the river and was awaiting the purser, they

were overjoyed to see the Consul with him in the boat coming off to the ship. They hastened to the gangway for one last pressure of his honest palm and to reiterate their thanks, when he surprised them by saying: —

"So you thought to see the last of me, eh? Not at all, for I'm going with you. Have some business up North which nobody else can attend to. Come below, both of you, I want a look at your stateroom."

Following them into their room and closing the door, he held up a warning finger, and whispered: "*There's a spy on board.* Purser told me. Soon as I heard of it, I packed up a few things for the trip and hastened to warn you. That's why I'm here, and I'm going to stay by you till he's disposed of, if it takes a month to get rid of him. But leave that to me. That miserable clerk of mine must have overheard some of our conversation, but I'm pretty sure he didn't hear all."

"What shall we do?" asked Arthur, who was generally the spokesman.

"Do? Why, you'll go right ahead and do as we had planned. I'll attend to Mr. Spy. We have three days to scheme in, and if I can't dispose of him before we get to Cristi, you may take my head for a football. Come on deck now, and act as if nothing had happened. I want to point out the sights to you."

The steamer was then rounding the point below

the mouth of the river, and the city was far astern. A man stood on the point waving his hat, and after a long look at him the Consul took off his "Panama" and whirled it vigorously.

"That's Ben," he explained. "Cable operator, you know. Fellow that got the warship over here just in the nick of time. You ought to remember that, I reckon."

"Indeed, we do," declared Arthur. "And we owe him something, too, for his aid, for he ran a good deal of risk, we were told."

"That he did," assented the Consul. "But don't worry about paying him back just now. The time may come when you can repay him with interest. It's a lonely life he leads there, all by himself in his little hut. And by the way, boys, his shanty is pitched on the site of the veritable tower in which your old friend Columbus was imprisoned when he was arrested by Governor Bobadilla. Don't you recall the story? Bobadilla was sent over to inquire into the doings of Columbus in the island, and rather exceeded his authority by putting the old Admiral in chains. Nice treatment that, wasn't it, as a reward for such distinguished services as he had rendered the king of Spain? But he was avenged soon after, right on this very coast."

XII.

Sailing o'er Historic Waters.

"THERE was one time," said the Consul, "when a hurricane did a deal of good in ridding the world of several worthless villains, and that time was the event I just mentioned. The way of it was this: After Bobadilla had sent Columbus home to Spain in chains, in the year 1500, he lorded it with a high hand in the island. He got all the work he could out of the poor Indians and he collected all the gold he could find, knowing well enough that his reign would be a short one; and in the course of a year, sure enough, he had run the length of his tether. King Ferdinand of Spain sent out another governor to supersede him, and Señor Bobadilla packed up his effects for home.

"Now it so happened that just about the time the fleet in which he was to sail was ready to depart, along came the man he had so terribly wronged; to wit, Christopher Columbus, with another fleet of ships and caravels bound on a third voyage of discovery. The king and queen of Spain had freed him from his fetters and cleared his character, but they had forbidden him to return to Santo Domingo, in

order to prevent a collision between him and the others who had usurped his place.

"Now, Admiral Columbus was weather wise, you know, and as he saw signs of a storm coming up about the time he made land on the south coast of Santo Domingo, instead of pursuing his voyage he made a run for shelter. He sailed into the Ozama River and sent ashore asking permission to make a harbor there; but the churls in possession of the city he and his brother had founded refused and bade him begone. So he set sail for a small harbor down the coast which he knew of, but before he went he tried to heap coals of fire on the heads of his enemies by giving them information of the coming hurricane, and warning them against sending out the fleet for Spain, which he saw was ready to sail.

"But they thought they themselves knew the weather signs, and besides, they distrusted Columbus more than the mariners of to-day distrust our weather bureau at Washington. Anyway, they did not heed his advice, and so he sailed down the coast for a shelter, while the fleet set sail for Spain. It was one of the largest and most richly laden galleon fleets that ever sailed out of the Ozama for old Spain, and had on board, besides the ex-governor Bobadilla, an ex-convict and rebel, Roldan, and some captive Indians, among them being a famous chieftain.

"Well, to make a long story short, the hurricane came up and sunk every ship of the fleet but one;

that was the one that was carrying the treasure and effects of Columbus to Spain. But the vessel in which were Bobadilla and the other illustrious people was sent to the bottom, and all aboard perished in the sea.

"But I haven't mentioned all that vessel contained which has made it an object of interest ever since, especially to wreckers and divers. It had on board the largest nugget of gold ever found in America, if not in the whole world. This nugget had been found by a poor Indian woman, who told her master, a Spaniard, about it, and he and a companion went and dug it up. They were so overjoyed at the sight that they used it for a table, and one time roasted a pig whole and had it served up on their golden table, boasting that no man ever before had such a truly priceless possession put to such common use.

"Bobadilla or some other man in authority made the miners give up their prize by threatening them with the law for trying to deprive their sovereign of his royal fifths, that being the proportion exacted for the king of Spain. Anyway, the great nugget was on board Bobadilla's ship when it was sunk by the hurricane, and it lies now at the bottom of the sea, that mass of gold said to weigh three thousand three hundred and ten pounds.

"Think of that, boys: more than a ton and a half of pure gold, worth at the least calculation more than eight hundred thousand dollars, down on the floor of

the sea waiting for somebody to haul it up to daylight! We are about over the spot where the vessel sank, I should think, or at any rate, it was not far from where we are now, right between us and the shore. Ah, if we could only peer into the depths of the sea and behold what is lying under water between the ribs of those old galleons! Why, that mass of gold alone would be worth some trouble to get, methinks. What say you?"

"Whatever you say, Consul," replied Arthur, who, like his brother, had been listening attentively to all their friend's remarks. "You are our silent partner, you know, but yet you have a voice in affairs. In fact," he continued, laughing, "seems to me that for a 'silent' partner, you have done a good deal of talking."

"Oh, well," rejoined the Consul, "if I talk too much, let me know before it goes too far."

"I beg your pardon," Arthur hastily replied. "Of course you have not talked too much. Everything you have said has been to the point and wonderfully interesting. About this great nugget, for instance, Hart and I have often speculated as to its size and the place where it went down; but we never thought to be near the very spot. Do you really think it might be located?"

"Haven't a doubt of it. But the trouble would be to get it out, for it is probably embedded in the timbers and beneath the wreckage of the galleon; and

besides, nearly four hundred years have passed since she sank, and it may be buried fathoms deep in mud. But we won't bother about that now. When you shall have found that other treasure, we shall have money enough to fit up a wrecking expedition with some chances of success. Till then, we will hold this matter in abeyance.

"But look over there by the forward hatchway. There is your friend, the spy, gazing over the rail. Don't let him catch you watching; but note his appearance well. He looks the cutthroat, doesn't he?"

"A more villainous face I never saw, not even excepting that of our former jailer," answered Arthur. "But how are we going to thwart him, Consul? Is he alone? If so, I'm sure Hart and I can attend to him."

"Yes, I think he is alone, but am not quite sure yet. Lelee generally has his hunters out in couples, in case an accident should happen; but so far I haven't been able to locate his partner, if he has one. The purser will find out for us, however, before we get to Cristi, as he has to pass on all the tickets, and can elicit a good deal of information in the way of legitimate questioning.

"But I'm hungry, and also tired. The gong just rang for dinner. Suppose we go below and have something to eat, then seek our respective couches for the night. That's a glorious sunset over there, to be sure; but a sunset is something always on exhibition,

at least once a day, to people out of doors, while a good dinner, such as the steward of the *Sangamon* provides, is not always to be had for the asking. Take the advice of an old stager, boys, and while keeping your appreciation for the beauties of nature, at the same time recollect that they are not filling as a steady diet. Men of your age are likely to moon about a good deal over intangible things; men of my age stick to realities. Still, a judicious mixture of romance and reality is good for one, if he can but discriminate between the real and the unreal. *Sabé?*"

"I fancy much of what you say is pure nonsense," declared Hart; "but perhaps we can pick out the nuggets of wisdom as we find them. One thing we know, and that is your discretion and diplomacy have not been at fault, — not in our case."

"My discretion goes overboard when my sympathies are aroused, — as in your case, — and as diplomacy, they say, is the art of talking a great deal without saying anything, I ought to be a past master of the art. Is that what you meant to say? But, no matter; don't stop to answer. Here's the dining hall and the dinner; now fall to and enjoy yourselves."

After dinner was over the three friends took a short stroll about the deck, then sought their staterooms, slept through the Mona Passage and around the eastern end of Santo Domingo, and awoke at

daybreak in time to close their "ports" against the deluge sent over the sides of the ship by the sailors engaged in washing off the decks. The water was now quite smooth, in contrast to the rough seas that had tossed them about during the night, and the boys knew before they had gained the companionway that they must be under the lee of the land. But they were not prepared for the scene of beauty that burst upon them as they reached the deck, for right abreast the steamer lay a cresent-shaped beach of snowy sand, above which hung long-leaved cocoa palms, and the contrasts of color — the heavenly blue of the sea and the vivid green of the palms, with the white sands sparkling between, were entrancing.

"Ah, here we are in Samana Bay. How is that for scenery?" It was the Consul who addressed them, stretched out in a steamer chair sipping his morning coffee and drinking in the glories of the shore as they steamed slowly past.

"Glorious," said Arthur. "And what is that thing out there sending up a stream of vapor?"

"That's a whale," replied the Consul. "He's got in shallow water and had better look out or he will get stranded. And look at the dolphins, chasing those flocks of flying fish. Pretty, aren't they?"

"Very," said Arthur, seating himself and drawing up a chair for his brother. "Order some coffee, Hart, and let's take it on deck, for this is like a beautiful panorama, and we ought not to lose a bit

of it." Hartley did as requested, then came and sat down beside his brother and their friend.

"See that pretty cove over yonder, the one with a headland at the farther end and a half-moon beach with clumps of palms? Yes? Well, that is where the first Indian blood was shed by Europeans in the New World. Yes, right there, I believe. It was on the return trip of Columbus's first voyage to America, sometime in January, 1493. He rounded the great head over yonder, and came into this bay, which he called the Gulf of Arrows, from the fact that when he sent a boat ashore for water, the crew was saluted by flights of arrows from the Indians camped there.

"It seems that they were Caribs, and quite different from the Indians the Spaniards had left a few days before on the coast of Haiti; and as the white men had never met the Caribs before, and the Indians had never seen or heard of white men, it was a mutual surprise, as you may say. The red men recovered first, and let fly a dozen arrows or so, wounding one of the men in the boat and exasperating the rest so that they picked up their arquebuses and gave the aborigines a little better than they had sent. Some of the wild men were laid out on the spot, and the rest were so astonished that they gave up the fight right off and hastened to make terms with such wonderful people as they saw before them, who could — as they thought — command the thunder and the lightning.

"That's about all there was of it except that Columbus learned from these Indians — or thought he did — about an island to the south and west of here, which was inhabited solely by Amazons or fighting women, who allowed no man whatever to land on their shores. He set out in search of that island, but after sailing awhile, the wind came up favorable for the voyage Spainward, and he drew about and started for home. So this was the very last land he and his crew looked on before making their landfall in the Azores, on the homeward voyage.

"Ha, there is our friend the spy, out bright and early, and casting furtive glances about. Perhaps he thinks you are going ashore here; but he's going to learn a thing or two before he's many hours older."

XIII.

The Spy makes an Involuntary Voyage.

THE steamer came to anchor in the landlocked harbor abreast the little town of Santa Barbara, but there was hardly time to go ashore to see the place, so the passengers stayed aboard. This town is the chief emporium of the great peninsula of Samana, but is famous mainly for its harbor, which has long been coveted as a coaling station by several maritime powers, the United States included.

The boys were surprised to hear a respectable old negro who came off to the ship address the Consul in excellent English, and after they were introduced, they learned that he was the pastor of a large flock of American negroes, chiefly descendants of a colony that had been made here fifty or sixty years ago. In fact, though it is not generally known, the most of the peninsula of Samana, with its beautiful scenery, its genial climate and fertile soil, is occupied by black and colored people who speak English and are the most thrifty people on the island.

Learning that the young men were intending visiting the interior of the island, the old minister gave them his card, saying, as he did so, "There are

several of my people scattered about in the mountains of the interior, and if you should meet with any of them and show them this card, there is nothing in the world they would not do for you."

"That's true," added the Consul, by way of indorsement, "for if there are any honest people in the wide, wide world, Father Johnson's parishioners answer to that description. I wish we could get one of them to go with you, for then I should feel that you were comparatively safe."

"Are not these the young men the President incarcerated in the Homenage?" asked the old man. Having been answered in the affirmative, he rejoined: "Indeed, then, they may feel glad to have escaped that *loup garou*, who rarely lets any lambs of my flock return if ever they stray far away from the fold. His loathsome procurers have several times been here; once they took away a fine young man, despite my protests, and he perished miserably in the jail at the capital. Why? I never knew. If I mistake not, I saw one of those evil men leaning over the rail as I came aboard. If I could only get sufficient proof of his guilt, I would have him taken into custody. But then, it would do no good, for his master would have him released at once, and would probably put me, old as I am, in his place."

Thus the boys received confirmatory evidence of the presence on board of one of Lelee's spies, or procurers, and if they had had any doubts as to the

correctness of the Consul's surmises, they no longer entertained them.

Next morning, after a short night's run, they entered the harbor of Puerto Plata, or the Silver Port, so called, some say, from a silver cloud that hangs over a mountain near it, and others say from some silver-laden galleons having been raised near it which were sunk in buccaneer times.

It is one of the prettiest ports in Santo Domingo, and has an air of thrift and cleanliness which most of the other places lack. This may be owing to the presence here of some enterprising Americans, who have sugar plantations adjacent and are also engaged in commercial business.

A short stay only was made here, and then the steamer left for Monte Cristi, about a hundred miles westward. About three in the afternoon the boys sighted familiar landmarks, when the headland protecting the site of Isabella came into view, for it was here that they had landed some months before, when they made their unfortunate excursion to the mountains. Here, also, in December, 1493, the first European settlement in America was started by Columbus, and the ill-fated city built which he called Isabella, after the queen of Spain. All about it is a wilderness now, and even the very site of the city is covered over with a rank growth of tropical vegetation.

"That was a wild-goose chase, wasn't it, Art?"

It was Hartley who spoke, musingly, as he recurred to their adventures after landing here. "But we had a good time, didn't we?"

"Indeed we did," replied Arthur. "I shall never forget the nice little hut we made and then had to abandon, the flocks of parrots that came at our call, the mocking-birds that sang for us every morning, and the wild fruits we found in the forest. Then the feeling that we were the first ones to re-discover the lone city in the woods, which had been left desolate ever since Columbus was there, four hundred years ago. How happy we were, Hart, and how free. Do you remember the little sand beach between the bluffs, where we used to take our baths every morning at daylight, and had to carry cudgels into the water to frighten away the barracoutas? Of course you do, for it was only a few months ago, though it does now seem years, when I think of what has happened to us since."

Thus indulging in reminiscence, the boys gazed longingly at the scenes of their former adventure, straining their eyes to see the last vestige of beach and woodland as the steamer passed. But the Consul had then no time nor taste for reminiscence. He was looking forward to the near future, and scheming how he could rid his young protégés of that hateful spy. He remained closeted with the purser for more than an hour, and as he emerged from the latter's room his eyes twinkled with satisfaction. Hastily

walking aft, he sought the boys, where they were standing looking at the fast-receding hills of Isabella, and opened fire at once.

"Look here, my hearties. The thing is all arranged. Purser and I have fixed it to the queen's taste. You know I bought two tickets for you to New York; but you are to get off at Cristi, while our sable friend, the President's minion, will perforce travel on your passage. As there will be two tickets, he can thus go up and back; though as to when he returns is a matter not yet settled. We shall get to Cristi after dark, but as I have cabled for my consular agent to meet me with his boat and take us directly ashore, we shall have no trouble in landing.

"Meanwhile Mr. Spy is to be locked in the purser's strong room, — that is, if he can be beguiled into it, — and not let out again until the steamer is well off toward the Bahamas. As there will be no further stops this side New York, the honorable gentleman deputed to spy upon your movements will probably have a couple of months to reflect upon the error of his ways before he can get passage back to his native land. In fact, it is doubtful if he ever does come back, knowing his master's unforgiving nature and that it is very likely he will have him shot for not carrying out his schemes to the very letter. How does that strike you?"

"Why, it is a good scheme," said Arthur, "if it

will only work. But seems to me it is a case of 'first catch your hare,' isn't it?"

"Oh, we'll catch that hare all right, for all the ship's company is on our side, and he can't get away. He's in for a voyage to New York, whether he wants to go or not."

"But if he doesn't?" urged Hartley.

"It will be just the same. Go he shall, and go he must. It's for the good of his country. What's that the poet says: 'He left his country for his country's good'?"

"But he may not think so, you know," said Arthur.

"Think so? Why, he's got to think so. Anyway, he's going, whether he wants to or not. Come, now, get your 'dunnage' together and be all ready to go ashore the minute the steamer slows up. I have fixed it with the purser, as I said, and he is to hold the man a prisoner until too late for him to escape."

Well, the Consul's plan worked beautifully. The steamer arrived at the roadstead of Monte Cristi about nine at night, and just as it slowed up sufficiently to drop the inland and take aboard the outgoing mails, a long-boat manned by a stalwart crew shot up to the gangway and hooked on.

"Here we are, Consul," cried the steersman, who was the consular agent himself. "Tumble out, sir, for the tide is swift right here and it's a long pull ashore."

The trio did as commanded, and in less than ten minutes they and their luggage were aboard the long-boat and being rowed away from the steamer. But suddenly their attention was caught by hideous howls of rage from a porthole amidship, and looking in their direction they saw in the dusk of night a head protruding from it. Then a hand was thrust out, followed by another, and more quickly than they could have believed possible, a lithe body was drawn out of the porthole and hung for a moment suspended above the water.

"It's that miserable spy," growled the Consul. "Who would have thought he could crawl through that port? But there he is, and the only thing to do is to head him off and take him back aboard ship." Then: "Stern all!" he shouted to the oarsmen. "Perhaps we can catch him in our boat as he drops!"

But no. Hardly had the long-boat gone astern half its length, when a splash was heard, and the water closed over the dark form, which sped swiftly downward.

The rowers then stopped and rested on their oars, while all hands watched for the reappearance of the spy. Finally his head popped up several rods away, and he struck out lustily for the shore. The boat was headed for him, and the men bent to their oars again, when a sharp cry was heard: "Oh, the sharks!" Looking in the direction of the swimmer,

those in the boat saw a huge triangular fin cleaving the water not far away, then another and another.

"The water's full of them," shouted the agent. "I wouldn't give much for that fellow's chances right now."

Even as he spoke the spy was seen to throw up his arms.

"They've got him," yelled one of the sailors.

"No, no," cried the agent. "Not yet, he has the cramps."

The boat was now right over the spot where he had sunk, and his form could be indistinctly traced by the phosphorescent bubbles rising around him disturbed by his descent. The attention of all was drawn irresistibly to the sight, — of all but one, — but as a splash was heard the charm was broken. They looked around and saw that the place till then occupied by Arthur Strong was vacant. He had divested himself of coat and shoes, and, unobserved, had plunged into the water, evidently with the intention of trying to save the sinking spy.

A stream of phosphorescence bubbled after him as he dived directly downward, and by their silvery light his course was easily traced. There were other streaks of light drawn hither and thither through the water, as those cruel monsters of the deep glided about uneasily watching for opportunity to snatch their prey. Just as Arthur had reached the spy and was about to seize him by the shoulder, to guide his

body upward, an immense shark darted directly for him. As it turned over to bring its hideous jaws together the Consul, who had gripped the boat rail until the blood almost burst through his fingers, exclaimed: —

"He's gone, I fear! Can't we save him? Men, can't you swim?"

"Can swim," grunted one of the sailors; "but nigger don't fight shark! Shark eat black, but won't touch white man while black man there. That man care for self. You see!"

Hartley, meanwhile, sat as if cast in iron. Having such implicit confidence in his brother as to believe he could not come to harm through an act of his own, and knowing his powers in the water, he had no real fear. And yet, those throngs of sharks, which now swam apparently in shoals about the man and boy below, were enough to appall the stoutest nature. His heart beat tumultuously, but still he sat there, rigid, and to all appearances calm.

"He has a knife," he whispered huskily to the Consul, "and he knows how to use it. Have no fear. He will come back alive."

"My poor boy!" groaned the Consul, "I wish I could think so."

XIV.

One Enemy out of the Way.

SUDDENLY a great shout went up from the man in the bows of the boat, who, from having a position nearest the combatants, could better see what was happening down below.

"He gives it to him! The blood spurts out! He has killed him!"

"Who? What? Who is killed?" demanded half a dozen voices.

"The shark! the shark!" answered the man in the bows. "The white boy stabbed him in the throat just as he turned to snap his head off. But I can't see more, for the water is filled with blood."

"Watch for them to come up," shouted the agent. "Be ready, all of you. Get out a boat-hook. Stand by to pull them in the minute their heads appear above water!"

The water was so turbid now that nothing could be seen below, and on the surface it was lashed to foam by the scurrying sharks. They seemed to know, all of them, that something terrible had happened, — that a wary foe was fighting them in their own element, — and they were evidently excited.

Through it all sat Hartley and the Consul, silent, watchful, one on either side the boat, leaning half over the rail, ready to seize the first one of the men whose lives were imperilled, should he appear above water. A round black object, a man's head, came up right under Hartley's extended hand, and he seized it firmly, calling for aid. Several pairs of hands were out in an instant, and the man was drawn safely into the boat. Hartley's heart was in his throat, and when it was revealed that the man saved was not his brother, after all, he made as though he would have cast himself into the water.

But the agent laid a restraining hand upon him, and at that moment the Consul cried out: —

"Here he is! I have him. Your brother is safe!"

He drew Arthur in over the rail, limp and apparently lifeless, just as a huge shark, seemingly the leader of the monsters at the surface, darted at the escaping prey, barely missing his legs and tearing a strip from the gunwale of the boat.

"Fall back, men," shouted the agent. "To your places, or you'll swamp the boat. Pull for the land, now, all you know how."

"No, no," cried the Consul. "Not for land; back to the steamer. Pull!"

"All right, then, for the steamer. Now let's attend to these men."

The agent, the Consul, and Hartley, comprising

the passengers of the craft, laid the two rescued men out on the thwarts, and did all they could to resuscitate them, giving impartial attention to friend and foe. Both had succumbed to the ordeal through which they had passed, and were unconscious; but the black man, though he had been in the water longer than Arthur, must have been of tougher fibre, for he was the first to revive. By the time the steamer was reached, also, Arthur opened his eyes and gazed wonderingly up into his brother's face. Then Hartley broke down and, though hitherto so calm and restrained, cried from excess of joy.

"My own brave brother!" he murmured, pressing Arthur's head against his shoulder and stroking the pallid face. "I should have died, Art, if you had drowned."

"Here we are," said the agent. "Steamer's waiting for us to come aboard. Shall we take 'em both on deck, Consul?"

"No, only the Dominican. Arthur, my boy, you're well enough to go ashore now, aren't you?"

Arthur nodded assent, and the Consul continued, "Well, then, my friend," addressing the man Arthur had rescued, "how do you feel? Able to walk?"

The man got to his feet, and by steadying himself against two of the sailors, was able to get out of the boat. Although he had made such exertions to get ashore, even at the risk of his life, he now seemed

to have changed his mind; at all events he was tractable, and when asked if he would go quietly on the voyage to New York, answered that he would. He then volunteered the information that if he could get something to do, he would rather stay there, as he knew Lelee had "a rod in pickle" for him when he should return to the capital.

"All right," said the Consul. "The sea bath seems to have brought you to your senses." He was assisted to the deck, while the long-boat awaited below, and the Consul said to the purser, who came to meet them:—

"Joe, just give this man fifty dollars when he arrives in New York, or else get him a job that will support him, will you? He's leaving the island for his health, and is afraid he may have a relapse if he returns very soon; understand?"

"Every bit," replied the purser. "He shan't get back for another month, anyway, even if he wants to. Got any luggage, my man? No? Well, then, go up forward and report to the forecastle steward."

"Wait a moment," added the Consul, as the man was shuffling away. "Tell me, now that you have no further object in dogging the movements of these two friends of mine down below in the boat, tell me if you have any partner or companion."

"No," answered the spy, "I came alone. But—" he hesitated.

"But what?" demanded the Consul. "Remember,

one of those boys has saved your life, at the risk of his own, and surely you cannot have anything against them now."

"No, I never had; but it was to do Lelee's bidding I came on this trip. But I am not the only spy in Lelee's employ. Know that. The island is full of his men, — you know that!"

"Yes, I know it. But is there any one in particular they must look out for? Is there any one we cannot avoid or bribe?"

"Yes, there is one. Tell them to look out for the old man who lives in the Cibao called '*el Diablo Colorado*' (the Red Devil). He cannot be avoided, and he will not be bribed. He is Lelee's adviser, his '*papa-lois*,' you know."

"Oh, yes, his spiritual adviser, we may call him, a high priest of the voudou. I've heard of him, and if all accounts are true, he has more than one child murder to answer for."

"They *are* true," rejoined the spy; "he has murdered many."

"That's all. Thank you. And look here. It seems mighty hard to send you away from home and country against your will. If I could trust you, I would say come with us and go ashore. What do you say?"

"You could trust me, Señor Consul; when I was sinking in the water, with death awaiting me, as I thought, my life came up before me, and I saw how wicked I had been. I resolved that if I should escape

I would do better, Señor Consul. But I cannot do better here in Santo Domingo, for my master has me in his power and he bids me do evil. So it is for the best that I go away, and I am only thankful, not revengeful, that you have given me this chance. Thank, too, the young man who saved my life. If I should return and he should be here still and need my help, he has only to command Salvador Braur, his servant till death."

"Spoken like a man," said the Consul, grasping the Dominican's hand and wringing it heartily. "I am glad you have been turned from the evil of your ways. I wish as much could be said of your master; but I fear he has as many lives as a cat, and we should have to drown him nine times over to bring repentance to his hard heart. Purser, if this man needs money you may draw on me to the amount of a hundred dollars instead of fifty. Now, good-by, my friend. Here, before you go, drink a drop of this cordial which I am taking to the boy in the boat. It will do you good. Now take care of yourself, and may God help you keep your new resolutions. Ha, there's the bell for starting the engines. Well, purser, *adios*. Many thanks for all your aid. You know where to find me when the bills come for settlement, you know. Keep an eye on that man, and help him all you can. There's good in him, I believe. Shove off, now," ordered the Consul, as he sprang into the long-boat.

"For shore, as quick as you know how. Pardon, my boy, for keeping you here so long; but I had to settle with the man you rescued. I hope you're all right again by this time. Here, now, take a little of this medicine sent by the steward. That will revive you, I'm sure. Ha! Sends a thrill through your veins, doesn't it? You feel all right now, don't you? Yes? That's good. It may rejoice your heart to be told that the man you saved, whose name is Salvador Braur, by the way, has experienced a change of heart, and from being your deadly enemy desires to be of service whenever possible."

"I'm glad," said Arthur, "that he has no ill-will against us."

"Glad? Well, of course! To tell the truth, my boy, I had my doubts about your jumping overboard to save the life of such a scoundrel as he evidently was, and if you had consulted me beforehand, it would not have been saved."

"But I didn't stop to think about his character," said Arthur. "I only felt that the man was drowning, and that but for us his life would not have been imperilled. It was my duty to attempt to save him, and I don't care what you think about it!"

"Hoity-toity! Well, no doubt you did just what was right, as it turned out; but if you had been drowned, I am thinking your brother and I wouldn't have taken your view of the case. But where did you learn the use of a knife so handily? It takes a

cool head and a strong arm to jab a man-eating shark in the throat as you did down there under water; and what nerves you must have to seize that man by the arm and push him up to the surface, with dozens and dozens of sharks all about you. Why, man, it was superb! I never heard of such a feat!"

"Oh, don't, Consul. The thing is over, and now let it rest. If good has come of it, I am very glad. Hart knew what I was about. He knew I could take care of myself in the water. He saw me take the knife."

"Yes, maybe," said Hartley, with a shudder. "But I would not have let you jump into such a place as that, if I had guessed your intention. The odds were all against you."

"Well, perhaps; but here I am, you see, alive and well." Hartley made no reply, but drew an arm still closer about his brother's neck and caressed his hands, as they lay folded in his lap. A tear splashed down upon them, and Arthur looked up quickly. "Oh, is that the way you feel about it, Hart?" he whispered, returning the caress. "Well, after this I'll be more careful of myself."

The remainder of the trip was accomplished without incident, and as soon as the boat's keel grated on the sand, the Consul had Arthur borne to the agent's house, where he was at once put to bed, though much against his will. "You treat me like a baby," he protested. "Why, I'm all right. Swallowed some

sea water, and was pretty tired when you pulled me into the boat; but the water was warm, and no harm will come from the ducking."

"This is our house, Mr. Brown's and mine," replied the Consul, "and as you are our guest, you will obey orders. You will stay abed till morning, while your clothes are being dried out; but after supper we will all sit around and tell shark stories, to keep you company and entertain you, if you like. Bless my stars," he added, turning to Hartley, "you boys are beginning to assert yourselves. I didn't think either of you had the least bit of spunk, but here your brother jumps overboard to save the life of a worthless fellow sent on purpose to spy upon you, and you venture to oppose my authority and encourage him in his obstinacy." The Consul's tone was severe, but there was a merry twinkle in his eyes that belied his words and accents; so the boys took him at his intention and joined in the raillery.

"I think we've been tied to your apron-strings quite long enough," rejoined Hartley. "It's about time we were up and doing something on our own account. Now, don't you think so?"

The Consul rubbed his chin and replied slowly: "Ye-es, I suppose so; but as I said before once upon a time, you'd better not cut loose from my apron-strings, as you call them, until you feel quite able to take care of yourselves. I'm not a betting man, but I'd be willing to wager considerable that you will get

into some terrible scrape or other before the month is out."

"Well, if we do we will get out of it the best way we can; but we won't send for you until we have to." Then Hartley continued more seriously, "We owe you now more than we can ever repay, and —" "Nonsense!" interjected the Consul. "You don't owe me anything! Now go to bed."

XV.

Stories of Ravenous Sharks.

BOTH boys were awake and up with the dawn, after a refreshing sleep, neither any the worse for the exciting adventures of the night before. They strolled out through the open doorway to the broad veranda, where a view opened before them, comprising the great bay and the tent-like mountain which was named Monte Cristi by Columbus. Some have compared the shape of this strange isolated peak to a sail, and others to a tent, from its pointed summit and triangular base. It is a noted landmark and can be seen far at sea.

It was here that the recreant companion of Columbus, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, who had left him in the *Pinta* off the east end of Cuba, on that first voyage to America, rejoined him after an absence of several weeks. So the mountain and the bay are historic, connected as they are with the beginnings of our history. They are not so beautiful as they are striking, for the rains fall seldom here, and there is very little vegetation of any sort.

But in the light of early morning, with the sun's almost level rays smiting the bare sides of the great

pink mountain, the waters of the crescent-shaped bay sparkling and baring their white teeth on the coral ledges, and the myriad sea fowl sailing through the air, the scene was superb.

In a shaded corner of the veranda, the boys came across Mr. Brown, the consular agent, sipping his morning coffee and glancing over some accounts at the same time. He welcomed them heartily, and sending a small black boy out to the cook-house for an extra supply of coffee, invited them to join him.

"I needn't ask you how you feel, after your scrap with the sharks," he said to Arthur, "for you are looking well this morning. But that was a narrow escape, my boy.

"Do you see that coral reef just awash out there in the bay? It is sometimes covered at high tides, but is safe enough to land on in calm weather, when the fishermen go there for conchs and mussels. Well, one of my men went out one day, and after pulling up his boat on the reef, left it to look for conchs. He was gone some time, and when he returned, he saw his boat floating away quite half a mile distant. He was a good swimmer and would have followed her, but he knew the water was full of sharks, and was afraid to venture. Monte Cristi Bay has the worst sharks in the world, I really believe, and more to the square mile than any other body of water I ever heard of. Some people say that sharks won't touch a man in the water; but let them come

down here and try it, is all I have to say. I guess you can give an opinion about the man-eating proclivities of our sharks, can't you, young man?"

"I don't want to come any nearer to testing them than I have already," answered Arthur.

"No, and if you hadn't been keen with that knife of yours, you wouldn't be here drinking coffee with me this morning, I'll be bound.

"Well, as I was saying, the man was afraid to strike out for the boat, and as there were other fishermen afloat on the bay and likely to pass at any time, he retreated to the highest part of the reef and sat down to wait for relief. But pretty soon he was driven from his sitting posture by a wave lapping against his seat, and sprang up, surprised to see that the reef was nearly covered by water. Only a narrow ledge remained above the surface then, and it was not long before even that was under water.

"And the mischief of it was, that the bay was alive with sharks all around the reef. They seemed to have formed a cordon about it for the purpose of cutting off the man's escape. He saw then the danger of staying much longer there, and yelled with all his might for help, at the same time splashing the water with his feet and hands too, in the vain hope of scaring the sharks away. But the more he splashed and shouted, the closer the great gray monsters came about the reef, until at last some were snapping at his very heels.

"Two men in a boat happened to spy him about this time and hastened to his rescue; but before they had got within a hundred yards of the reef, they saw a huge shark turn on his side and force himself clean up on the reef with the speed of a steamboat. He snatched the poor fellow by the legs and dragged him into the water, but as the momentum of his rush had carried him high up into water too shallow to float him the shark could not get back again, and just lay there, shaking the miserable victim as a terrier would a rat. The man's cries were heartrending, but they soon ceased, for though the shark that had caught him couldn't back off into deep water, other fiends came up in shoals, and the would-be rescuers were so frightened when they saw them churning the water into foam and rending their comrade, that they turned about and rowed as hard as they could for the shore.

"I happened to be looking through my marine glasses at the time and saw the latter end of the fight, which so incensed me that I ordered my boat, took along a rifle with plenty of cartridges, and hurried out to the reef. When we got within rifle-shot I saw that the big shark was still stranded, and couldn't get away, — at least not until the tide rose higher, — so I peppered away at the sharks around the reef in shallow water, and before long had sent more than two dozen of them to their last accounts. Then I went in closer and put a ball right through

the monster on the reef. But of course there was no vestige remaining of its victim, for the other sharks had carried off every bit of him, even torn his clothing to pieces and taken it away with them to fight over. So I had a sort of revenge, you see; but a poor sort, since it didn't bring the fisherman back to life.

"My men and others towed the dead sharks to shore and tried out their oil, which is excellent for certain purposes and brings a fair price; and finding there was some money in the business, I have since continued the hunting of sharks for profit. I must have shot more than a thousand all together, but their numbers seem hardly to have diminished at all. There appear to be as many now as when I came here six years ago, or when I began to shoot them, which was two years ago. I suppose they all know me by this time, though, and if ever they catch me in the water, as you were caught last night, I wouldn't give much for my chances."

"You could hardly expect much mercy to be shown you, seems to me," said Arthur, "after having given no quarter to the sharks."

"Maybe you're right. I've thought so myself, and I'm going to get out of this horrid place as soon as I can wind up my business affairs. That black fisherman was not the only man I've seen destroyed by those sharks. Only last steamer day, for instance, one of the sailors aboard a lighter that

was loading alongside the Spanish line steamer fell overboard and sank about thirty feet or so before he recovered himself. As he struck out for the surface a shoal of sharks darted for him like a flock of hawks after a quail, and in less than ten minutes hardly a shred remained of the unfortunate sailor."

"What's this I hear?" asked some one in the doorway. "Good morning, boys. What is Brown doing? Telling shark stories? You must take what he says '*cum grano salis*,' you know."

As the Consul joined the group on the veranda, Mr. Brown entered his protest. "You must retract, Garland. You know that in the matter of sharks and their doings here it is impossible for me to exaggerate."

"Very well, I will, if you'll give me a cup of coffee. I said '*cum grano salis*,' didn't I? Well, that means, of course, with a grain of salt, doesn't it? And I fancy there are several grains of salt in the water the sharks swim in, don't you? There, is that satisfactory?"

"Oh, it will have to be, I suppose," rejoined Mr. Brown. "But since you have tried to implant a doubt of my veracity in the minds of our young friends here, suppose you 'take a hand' yourself. Come, spin us a yarn of your own, and I'll discount it in advance by declaring that for astonishing and credulity-taxing statements mine won't be in the same class."

"Of course they won't, Brown. Do you think I

am going to cut in with a yarn less wonderful than yours? Not I. But here goes. When I was in Jamaica a few years ago, — it was in '91, by the way, and the Jamaicans had an exposition of the island's resources, — one of the things that impressed me most was a bundle of old and sea-stained papers, which had once been the records of an American schooner, the crew of which had been convicted of piracy and hung. It seems that this schooner was fitted out in the Bahamas, and began to prey upon the commerce of the Windward Channel, between this island and Cuba. A British man-of-war was sent in pursuit of her, and the chase becoming close, the captain of the schooner threw his ship's papers overboard, in order that there might be no incriminating testimony against him. But he and his crew of seven men were taken into Kingston, Jamaica, and there an admiralty court proceeded to try them for piracy.

"The penalty for piracy on the high seas was — and is now, I suppose — death, by hanging at the yard-arm; but the captain of the schooner conducted himself with perfect coolness, he was so confident that nothing could be found against him, and the judge was about to acquit him and his crew of the charges when a gun was heard in the offing, and soon after a message came ashore from another British man-of-war to arrest proceedings until certain evidence could be offered.

"Soon after an officer arrived from this second warship bearing a bundle of water-soaked and mutilated papers — the very ones, by the way, that I saw at the exposition — and laid them before the judge. When they were opened and examined they proved to be the very papers the captain of the schooner had thrown overboard, and which now appeared in this miraculous manner to bear witness against him and send him to the gallows. I say miraculous, because the manner in which they were brought to light was nothing less than that. It seems that the crew of the second man-of-war had caught a shark off the coast of Haiti, where the first man-of-war had overhauled the schooner, and wishing to get the fish's liver for the oil it contained, they cut it open. And in the maw of the shark they found — now, what do you suppose? Of course you can't guess, and I don't like to say, because Brown will declare I am telling a story. But the fact is, — and it can be attested to by those papers themselves and the records of the admiralty court, — the fact is that they found in that shark's maw that veritable bundle of papers thrown overboard by the unlucky Yankee captain.

"He was a cool man, was that captain of the schooner, but when he saw those papers brought up from the sea to bear mute witness as to his deeds, he wilted and confessed. He was a brave man, though, and in his way honorable, for he took all

the blame to himself and tried to save the lives of his crew; but, to make the yarn short, they were all swung off from the masts of the schooner they had used as a pirate vessel."

"I suppose we are to believe that story?" asked Mr. Brown, rather scornfully.

"You may do as you like, but it's true, — that is, if ever a sea yarn can be true, — and then there are the papers to corroborate it; while the tales you have told we have to take on trust!"

XVI.

Up the River of Golden Sands.

"DID you ever catch me in an untruth?" asked Mr. Brown, stiffly.

"No, I never did. But then, you know that when a man undertakes to tell a fish story he can rarely resist the inclination to tell a big one."

The Consul's eyes twinkled as he spoke, but Mr. Brown seemed to think the banter had gone far enough, and there wasn't a twinkle in his eyes, but on the contrary a rather cold and steely glitter.

The boys had sat silent hitherto, enjoying the stories and the remarks of the fun-loving Consul; but now their relations seemed to be so strained that they felt uneasy. Arthur was pondering upon whether or not he ought to interpose when the Consul settled the matter by going over to Mr. Brown, putting a hand on his shoulder, and saying:—

"Pardon me, friend, I didn't mean to doubt your word; but you ought not to be so touchy. I know that what you said is the truth; and I also know that with proper encouragement you would go on spinning fish stories all the day long; but our time is valuable, and we must hie ourselves each to our

respective quarters. I suppose you got my letter before the steamer sailed, and have the animals ready, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes," answered Mr. Brown, the frost of his ill-humor vanishing before the sun of the Consul's smiles. "The young men may set off to-day if they wish; though I should like them to stay at least till to-morrow, and would so advise."

"Do you hear that, Arthur, Hartley? Brown has a pair of spirited bullocks all ready for you to ride on up the valley, if you like, to-day. But he is so hospitable a fellow that he would rather you would stop a week or two with him. Cristi society isn't so very exacting that it makes any great demands upon his time, and I fancy he would rather you would stay than not."

"Yes, indeed," said the agent. "I should enjoy a lengthy visit, if they can put up with my accommodations."

"We should like to stay," said Arthur, "but I think we really ought to get on. However, if you will put up with us till to-morrow, we shall make an early start, provided it will be agreeable to all."

"Oh, if you mean me, yes," remarked the Consul. "I am only too anxious to get you off my hands. You can outfit right here, everything you will need, as Brown owns a store, and has orders to give you unlimited credit. And let me add that he has already bought for you two of the loveliest *buyes* (bullocks) to

ride, you know, and as pack-animals with '*aparejos*' or native pack-saddles, and everything complete, so at last you'll travel in style."

"Then we'll surely be off to-morrow, thanks to you and Mr. Brown. How far did you say it was to the Yanico, where we turn off from the main stream of the Yaqui?"

"Why, it's about a hundred miles; but you ought to know, for you've been over part of the way."

"True, but we cut across country from Isabella."

"So you did. But you know, of course, that the first part of the journey will be the worst: dry as a chip, and nothing but cactus and prickly pear for the first forty miles or so. About twenty miles from here you strike the river and follow it up until you get to the Cibao, or Country of Gold, as the Indians used to call it. And by the way, of course you know the traditions about the Yaqui; how it was called the Rio del Oro, or River of Gold, because Columbus first found gold in its sands. It was after he had left Navidad, the first fort he erected in the New World, and was making for Monte Cristi — this very spot. He stopped in the mouth of the Yaqui to water his vessels, and his men found flakes of gold clinging to the hoops of the water casks. It was there, also, on his return voyage a year later, that he found several bodies of dead Spaniards who had been murdered by the Carib cacique, Caonabo, having been left by Columbus to guard the fort."

"Yes, indeed, we know all that," said Hartley. "I believe we know the history of this island by heart; and to tell the truth, it is almost as fascinating to us as the prospect of finding the gold mines, to visit the scenes identified with Columbus and his voyages. This province and the one adjoining, in which Columbus built the fort of Navidad from the wreckage of his flag-ship, belonged to the cacique Guacanagari, who received the Spaniards with open arms and gave them nearly all he had.

"At first, you may remember, the massacre of the forty men left as a garrison for Fort Navidad was charged to Guacanagari; but after a while it leaked out that he had done all he could to defend the fort, and that the murders were committed by Caonabo, who was ruler over the Cibao country, the very region we are going to in our search for gold."

"More than that, remember," broke in Arthur; "it was his gold that Columbus alludes to in that inscription on the silver plate, which we hope has given us the clew to his treasure."

"Yes, don't forget that," cautioned the Consul. "I gave you the translation in English, for you to follow and consult, and if you go by it, I feel sure you'll be successful. If it should chance that Lelee's men capture you, be sure to destroy the paper. It is very thin, and you might swallow it as a last resort. But I don't want his Excellency to get it and benefit by our investigations."

"He shall not," replied Arthur. "I'll commit the directions to memory, and destroy the paper at the first opportunity."

"Well, that's all, then. You don't need any caution from me to keep a lookout for enemies. Nobody will bother you, except it may be some emissary of our friend the President, and as soon as I return to the capital I shall set my wits to work to forestall him."

The day was passed in preparing for the morrow, and when it dawned, the boys were ready to start as soon as they had swallowed their morning coffee.

They were assisted to mount their respective *aparejos*, — big pack-saddles made of straw, and which sat astride the bullocks' backs like immense sawhorses, and made all the higher by the piles of luggage atop. Besides the stuff that was strapped across the *aparejos*, other articles, as for instance a rifle, cutlass, revolver, tin cup, bag of provisions, etc., were hung around each one, making the whole "outfit" look exceedingly picturesque, indeed.

The *buyes* were docile and broken to the saddle, so the boys had confidence in them from the first. There was one objectionable feature, however, which they resolved to remedy as soon as possible, and that was the mode of guiding them, by means of a line tied to a ring in each bullock's nose. It seemed — indeed it was — cruel in the extreme; but as the bullocks had been broken to that kind of guidance,

and might not understand any other, it was necessary to continue it, at least for the time being.

The Consul and Mr. Brown laughed at their scruples as they rode off, telling them not to be in a hurry to break their "steeds" to another style of driving, as they would surely miss the accustomed ring in the nose and run away with them.

At last, with an *Adios* from the Consul, a squeeze each from his hand and "God be with you" from Mr. Brown, the boys were off, their bullocks' noses pointed mountainward. The sun was scarce an hour high, and cool shadows still lingered in the hollows between the bare, brown hills. Parakeets chattered in the tops of the "pitayhas," or giant cacti, mocking-birds sang melodiously in the sparse thickets, and the hearts of the young travellers beat hopefully in unison with the pulsings of nature.

Their bullocks marched on with stately tread, covering a great deal of ground without apparent effort; but their gait was not conducive to comfort, perched as their riders were, high up on a pile of luggage, and the boys felt as if they must be taking their first ride on "ships of the desert."

Thus they travelled until near noon, when, arriving at a spot where a spring sent forth a little stream beneath a spreading mango tree, and a circlet of grass was set like an emerald in the brown earth around it, they halted for rest and refreshment. They had seen no people within hail, and were glad

of it, for they did not wish to make acquaintances at this stage of their journey. Their provisions were ample for at least two weeks, and so long as they could find springs of clear water at intervals, like this one beneath the mango tree, they were quite content.

But it was one thing to say dismount, and quite another to get down from their lofty perches. The bullocks were tractable enough, generally speaking, but the sight of grass and water set them almost frantic. They poked their noses into the water and pawed up the grass, in their endeavors to satisfy thirst and hunger at the same time, and as the boys did not like to tug too strongly at the lines attached to their muzzles for fear of lacerating them, they were for a while in a quandary. At last Arthur said: "Look here, Hart. One or the other has to be master, and if the bullocks get the notion that they can manage us they certainly will do so. I'm going to pull up my bullock's head, if it takes his nose off. You bear witness now that I gave him warning. Hold up, old fellow; whoa, there! Confound him, he doesn't understand English; but I guess he will understand that I can make him 'walk Spanish,' if he doesn't mend his ways. There, I've got his head up, and I'm going to hitch it to this branch, so that he can't get away until I dismount."

The bullock shook his head and tossed his horns wildly about in a menacing manner, but Arthur paid no attention to his demonstrations until he had finally

slid down from his pack-saddle and alighted on the ground. Then for a few minutes he was too stiff to move, but when he had got the ten "kinks" out of his legs, he went over and held Hartley's bullock by the head while his brother got to the ground, where he fell all in a heap, so cramped was he from his long ride.

"Dear me, Art, I didn't think I was so stiff. But when we look back and find we've ridden ever since six o'clock, and it is now near noon, it's no wonder, after all. How many miles have we covered, do you think?"

"About thirty, I fancy," replied Arthur. "Just help me loosen the saddle, will you? I'm afraid to take it off altogether, lest we shan't be able to get it on again. That's it; now let's do it to yours, and then peg out the beasts to get a nip of grass. They ought to be tired, but really they don't look so. I believe, Hart, we've got a pair of real treasures in these bullocks, they are so tractable and kind, and so willing, too. I don't believe they would run away from us, even if we didn't tie them. Hi there, whoa, I tell you!" This to his bullock, who had suddenly tossed his head and started off up the road, as if a flight of hornets were after him. As the saddle was loosened it began to sway, then to work toward the bullock's tail, and at last toppled over, pack and all, in the dust, receiving a contemptuous kick from the animal as it reached the ground.

"There! Isn't that enough to provoke a saint?" exclaimed Arthur. "Tie your beast up, quick, or he will follow after, it's likely. Mine is nearly out of sight, but I'm going to try to catch him just the same. Wait here; and while I'm gone, open the hamper and set out a lunch." So saying, Arthur darted after his bullock, who was trotting over the crest of a hill some distance off.

He was out of breath, and very much out of patience, when he reached the hilltop, and he stopped to rest before pursuing his recreant beast any farther. The road plunged downward into a thicket of mesquit trees, out of which, at the moment he set forth again, came tearing a horse with a girl on its back. It was evidently a runaway, as the rider seemed to have lost all control over it. The steepness of the hill caused it to slacken its terrific pace a bit, and as it reached the crest, Arthur sprang forward and aimed to grasp it by the bridle.

XVII.

A Poet of the Sierras.

THE bridle-rein was broken and hung loos
Missing his grasp at the bridle, Arthur y
managed to seize the trailing rein, and twisting
about his wrist braced himself for a shock, as th
horse continued to dart onward.

When the shock came the horse was whirled ha
around, bringing the boy against its shoulder; bu
he instantly recovered himself and got a grip o
the animal's nose, soon stopping its career. H
was dragged a hundred yards or so in the proces
but contrived to keep clear of the horse's hoof
though he was pretty well out of breath when
last he triumphed and the beast came to a stan
still.

Then he had occasion to note what manner c
a rider it was who had kept the saddle during th
struggle, and saw that it was a very pretty Domin
can girl, about fifteen years of age. She had lo
control over her horse by the breaking of the bridl
rein, but had kept her seat by clinging to the animal'
mane. As afterward proved, she was a consum
mately skilful rider, and was much ashamed c

her misadventure. But she was very grateful to her rescuer, and told him so in well-chosen Spanish, as she gathered up the loosened coils of her jet-black hair and gathered into her hands the reins he had repaired.

"*Gracias, señor, mil gracias*, — thanks, sir, a thousand thanks, — I cannot tell you how grateful I am. My papa, who is somewhere behind, will soon be here, I hope, and add his thanks to mine."

"But it is hot, señorita," said Arthur. "You will not think of travelling farther in the sun, I trust. Beneath yonder tree my brother and I were about preparing lunch awhile ago, and if you will join us we should be glad to have your company — at least till your father arrives."

"You are very kind, señor, and I will accept your invitation," replied the girl, frankly, and with a smile which showed two rows of beautiful teeth. "But first tell me, is that not your beast on the road beyond the mesquit trees? And you were trying to catch it, were you not? I thought so. But let me tell you, he will never allow you to come up with him on foot. As a slight return for your kindness to me I am going after him myself, and if you will wait here will soon have him back again."

With that the girl, who had her horse now well in hand, wheeled about before the astonished lad could offer a protest, and was off at a gallop after the bullock. She had a short-handled, long-lashed whip at

her saddle-bow, and when she came up with the bullock she plied it so skilfully that he was only too glad to turn about and go wheresoever she desired. Not many minutes elapsed before he came trotting on ahead of her horse, and when he arrived opposite the mango tree where his mate was tethered, he turned in there of his own accord and suffered himself to be tied up without a struggle.

It may well be imagined that young Hartley was very much astonished to see this young girl on horseback come dashing up to the camp, and he was so very much surprised that he simply stood and stared at her, until his brother's laugh reminded him of his unintentional rudeness. Then he ran forward and held her horse while Arthur assisted her to dismount. That is, offered to assist her, but she declined his proffered hand with a pretty gesture, and gathering up her skirts leaped unassisted to the ground.

"I am under obligations to you both," she said with a graceful courtesy, "first for the rescue, and now for the lunch, for I am, oh, so hungry!" She said this with such a winning smile that the boys liked her at once, and voted her a good comrade.

"What a pity she isn't a boy, she seems so jolly and companionable," said Hartley to his brother, in an aside.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Arthur, with the conscious superiority of an elder brother. "I suppose she thinks she ought to appear as jolly as possible

under the circumstances. Now we must get out the very best we have in the line of eatables and give her a good lunch. She's a cute little thing, isn't she, with her cheeks like russet apples and her big brown eyes? And she's quite bright, too."

It was a merry lunch the trio had under the mango tree, with the sun creating a heat like that of a furnace outside the shade in contrast with the coolness within. The little lady did not seem much concerned about the tardy arrival of her father, only once saying: —

"Won't he be surprised to see me in the company of two Americanos?" She had ascertained that they were from the United States, and was curious about that country, which she had never seen. "Is it true," she asked quite seriously, "that the Yankees are nearly all *ladrones* — robbers — and that they want to steal our beautiful island?"

"Why, no," answered Arthur, laughing at the absurdity of the question. "We are not thieves; we never stole a thing in our lives."

"Oh, no, of course not. But I mean as a nation. My papa says the Americanos will never be satisfied until they have taken this island away from us, as they took Porto Rico and Cuba away from the Spaniards."

"Ah, you may not understand," said Hartley, "that we went to Cuba and Porto Rico to free the people there, and not to enslave them. We drove

out the Spaniards, to be sure, but only that the natives might have greater liberty. Our country is one of the grandest on earth. It stands for freedom and equality, and that is more than you have here, if all reports are true."

"Yes, indeed," she admitted with a sigh. "Now my papa has been put in jail by — but I must not speak his name, because — because — "

"Because he is the President," said Hartley, hotly.

"Yes, how did you know?" she asked in surprise.

Hartley was about to answer indiscreetly, Arthur feared, so he placed a warning finger to his lips, and answered for him. "Oh, we Yankees are good at guessing, you know."

"Are you? Then perhaps you can guess what my papa's profession is. No, you never could, so I am going to tell you: he is a poet."

"A poet!" exclaimed the boys, in surprise, that being the last profession they would have thought of, certainly, in this wilderness, barren of literature and patrons of the muses.

"Yes, a poet," she repeated, nodding her head gravely. "But, do you know, I fear he does not get rewarded properly, for nobody buys his poetry and he has to publish it all himself."

"That is discouraging," said Arthur, sympathetically; "but I suppose the reason is that there are very few literary people on the island, and consequently no demand for poetry."

"Oh, do you think so?" asked the girl, her face lighting up. "Then it is not because his poetry is poor, is it?"

"I'm sure it is not," said Arthur, "though I have not seen it; but if I should see it I should not be qualified to judge, because I am not a Spanish scholar."

"Papa thinks he has a divine mission, you know, to elevate and refine the people, and it was because of this that the President put him in jail. He said he did not want the people refined or elevated, for the more they knew the worse it was for them; that they got meddling in politics when they had a little learning. And he said papa's head was getting hot, so he would put him in jail awhile to let it cool off. Lelee seemed to think that was a great joke; but it was no joke for us, I assure you, as when papa was in jail we had very little to eat. Not that we have any too much at any time, though, for he is so absorbed in his poetry that sometimes he forgets to eat, and of course he forgets all about us, too. But he really doesn't mean to, for he is the kindest old papa in all the world. And here he comes, too. You must go out into the road, one of you, and stop him, for he is in one of his absent-minded fits and will go right on if you don't."

Hartley sprang up and ran out into the road. As he seized the horse's bridle, the poet looked up absently and exclaimed: —

"What, are there highwaymen on this road? Let me go, sir, for I have no money, and my business is urgent. Let me go."

He looked neither alarmed nor even surprised, only perturbed; but it was not until his daughter ran out and greeted him that he could be made to understand the situation. "Why, Rita, is this you?" he exclaimed. "Where did you come from? I thought you were riding behind me on little black Jess."

"So I was, papa," replied the girl, "until my rein broke and Jessica ran away. Don't you remember seeing me fly by you, long ago?"

"Ah, yes, now I recall the circumstances, but I thought you were only having a frolic. But how is it you are with these young men? And foreigners, too. What are their names, my daughter?"

"I — I don't know," replied the girl, in some confusion. "It was by accident we met. This gentleman caught Jessica and probably saved me from a bad fall, while this other, the younger, invited me to stay with them until you came and have something to eat. And, papa, I was so very hungry that — that — I know it was not quite proper — but I just had to accept his invitation or I should have fainted."

"My poor little girl. What a brute is your old father. I quite forgot, indeed I forgot, that we had not eaten since yesterday."

The poet dismounted, and taking his daughter's face tenderly between his hands imprinted a kiss on

either cheek. Then he suffered the boys to lead the way to their camp, where they introduced themselves — but not until after they had set some food before him and insisted upon his eating.

"Ha, *Americanos?*" he said, with a gleam of pleasure in his eyes. "Your country is one I have always desired to visit from my earliest youth. It is a great country, a land of the free and the home of honesty. Oh, if I could end my days in such a land! What would I give if but my children could be reared and educated there! Here all is darkness; there all is light!"

"Why don't you go there?" asked Arthur. "We have plenty of room."

"Too old, too poor," said the poet, mournfully, shaking his head. "Too old and too poor. But if I were young I should go. If I were young."

"Still, the winters are cold in the States," said Hartley. "You might miss the perpetual sunshine of this island."

"True, I might, for a while. But sunshine is of the soul, not an external product. The sun shines steadily here, as you say; but it cannot dissipate the darkness of ignorance and superstition. The first settlers, the Spaniards, left us a legacy of sin and hate, inasmuch as they murdered the poor Indians, who never did them harm, and compelled them to toil to their deaths in the mines. And that legacy is ours yet. Only the great Father knows when it will

be removed. But, by the way, have you seen the President?"

"Yes," answered Arthur, "and felt his power."

"Ha! so his heavy hand fell on you, even you, freemen of a free land? Who then shall escape him? But what think you of him?"

Arthur and Hartley looked at each other, then at the poet.

"We have our opinion," said Arthur, "but it does not seem to me that this is the time or place to express it, if you will excuse us."

"So you are cautious, you are afraid. True, the burnt child dreads the fire. I do not blame you. Besides, you do not know but that I may be a spy of his. Is not that so?"

"We have heard that he has such creatures," replied Arthur, "but we have no thought that you may be one. Still, as we are in Lelee's country, it behooves us to hold our peace, does it not?"

"You are right, it does. But I will not keep silence, even though he imprison me a second time."

"Papa, papa, hush!" It was the girl who spoke. "Look! look there, up in the tree, right over our heads! A man, a black man, and he has a gun!"

"Child, it cannot be. You are mistaken," cried the poet, in astonishment. "But no, you are right, and it is our old neighbor, Simon Sam, who betrayed me to the council. Now, indeed, my revenge has come, for his life is given into my hands!"

XVIII.

The Man in a Mango Tree.

ARTHUR'S rifle leaned against a tree, seeing which the poet seized and pointed it at the man overhead, who, though he had a gun in his hands, shouted, "Don't shoot, I will come down."

"That you will," retorted the poet. "You will come down, after I have sent a bullet through you, villain!"

"But don't do that, Alessandro Alix; remember I am your nearest neighbor in Santiago. I have never harmed you, Alessandro."

"Oh, I remember. True, you have never harmed me bodily, but you made such representations to the President as caused him to arrest me; and now your time has come."

"Oh, stay, don't shoot the fellow," said Arthur, laying a hand on Don Alessandro's arm. "I wouldn't if I were you."

"Yes you would, señor. You would, if you had suffered what I have from this man. Now I am going to pull trigger. Say your prayers, Simon Sam, for your last hour has come."

"Oh, yow, yow!" yelled the man in the tree. "Don't cut me off in the midst of my promising

career. Señor Americano, intercede for me, will you not? Recall me, I saw you at the capital."

"Yes, I recall that you were in command of troops sent to arrest me, just before we were cast into prison. I know no good of you, sir, and if Don Alessandro desires to shoot you, I shall not do anything to prevent him."

"Yow! yow! murder! help!" the man's voice rang out, but no answering call assured him of aid. His hands shook so that the rifle he held fell and came clattering to the ground.

"Papa, dear, do not kill him," entreated the girl. "You have never shed human blood in your life, remember. Do not stain your soul with it now, dear, dear papa, I entreat you!"

"I care not," answered the poet to this appeal. "The fellow deserves death. Now I am going to fire! Stand back, all of you."

There was a howl from the man in the tree, and a shriek from the girl; but the two Americans viewed the prospect of the coming tragedy with strange composure. As Señorita Rita turned to them for assistance in preventing her father from committing the crime, she was astonished to see them smile broadly; in fact, they seemed on the verge of bursting into laughter.

Seeing her look of wonderment, Arthur stepped to her side and whispered, "Don't agitate yourself, your father will not shoot."

"Not shoot? But he will. He is in earnest. See him now."

"Yes, he may be in earnest, but, — but in the first place he doesn't know anything about a rifle, and in the second that rifle is not loaded. There, now you know why we are amused, instead of alarmed."

But the little lady did not view the affair as a joking matter at all. She looked at the boys reproachfully and said: "But you saw that man had a gun. Suppose he had shot my father? He could have done nothing, with a rifle unloaded. Papa might have been killed."

Arthur and Hartley exchanged glances. "Tell her, Hart," said the former; and so the younger boy addressed himself to the girl: "Señorita, you may not have noticed that each of us has kept one hand in the right pocket of his blouse, during this interview with the man in the tree, and in that hand each of us grasped — "

"Saints preserve us," shrieked the girl, for at the last word Hartley uttered, he and Arthur had withdrawn their hands from their pockets, quick as a flash, and each hand held a revolver.

"These are loaded," said Hartley, significantly, "though the rifle was not; and if that man up there overhead had made a single movement endangering your father's life, we should have filled him with lead before he could have said 'Jack Robinson.'"

"Ye-es," rejoined the girl, hesitatingly, now recov-

ered from her fright, "but he might not have said 'Yack Robeenson.'"

"Just the same," said Hartley, "we should have had the 'drop' on him, sure as fate, for these revolvers are self-cockers and can almost go off themselves. Let me show you, for instance."

He tossed his hat into the air and bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, spoke his revolver, to an accompaniment of shrieks from the girl, who, though she had stopped her ears with her fingers, kept her big brown eyes fastened on the hat in the air. As it fell to the ground she ran and picked it up, examined it carefully, and then turned to the boy with an expression of wonder on her pretty face.

"How did you do it?" she asked; "and all the time it was up there in the air, too! There were five reports, for I heard them, and there are five holes in the hat." She poked a slender finger through every hole as she counted, in Spanish: "*Uno, dos, tres, quatro, cinco,*—one, two, three, four, five,"—then added: "Can your brother do that, too? Can he shoot a hat full of holes when it is up in the air?"

"Yes, indeed. Can't you, Art?"

"Reload your revolver, Hart, and I will, just to please her."

Hart understood. It might not do to have both revolvers empty at the same time; so he reloaded and then gave the command to fire.

"Whose hat?" asked Arthur, with a comical smile.

"Why, yours, of course. Mine is well ventilated already."

"Yes, but mine is newer than yours; and hats don't grow on bushes in this country, you know. It may be long before I find another."

"What a cheese-paring old Yankee you are, Art Strong," retorted Hartley. "No, you will use your hat or none. Hi! What's up?" For Arthur had suddenly spun around on his heel and took a flying shot at their erstwhile prisoner in the tree, who, taking advantage of their preoccupation, had slid silently to the ground and run off as fast as his legs could carry him.

The poet, finding he could not work the rifle, had sat down at the foot of the tree and lost himself in a study of its mechanism, for the time forgetting his bloodthirsty desire to wreak vengeance on his enemy up aloft. Then, when the pistol-shooting began he became absorbed in that, and watched the contest eagerly, without another thought of cunning Simon Sam.

Following the report of Arthur's revolver came a howl of anguish from the escaping prisoner, who promptly fell to the ground, where he lay prone, twitching convulsively.

"Oh, Art, you haven't killed him, have you?"

"Killed him? No, of course not. I merely plugged his hat. You see you were rather premature when you said it was your hat or none!"

"Yes, I know, Art, you are a good shot; but look at the man. Why, he seems mortally hurt. You must have touched his cranium."

"He's shamming. Tell the poet to go out and bring him in, while I keep him covered with my revolver."

The poet did as commanded, but he trod very gingerly when he approached the seeming corpse, and when he touched it on the shoulder and it turned over and groaned, he leaped into the air as though hit by a live electric wire.

"Dear me, he isn't dead," he cried out. "Poof! I thought you had settled him, once for all." As the man wouldn't get up, but persisted in lying there, giving utterance to most dismal groans the while, the poet rolled him over and over in the dust, while he searched for a wound.

"This is strange," he said, as the other members of the party now came on the scene. "There isn't a drop of blood, and no sign of a hurt."

"Perhaps he is bleeding internally," suggested his daughter, timidly, her woman's sympathy aroused, in spite of the fact that the man was her father's enemy.

"Not at all," declared Arthur, spurning the man with his foot. "He's playing possum, that's all. Get up, you coward," he commanded.

The man slowly scrambled to his feet, snivelling and groaning.

"Now," said Arthur, "if you want to find this man's wound, look in his hat," pointing to that article lying at one side the road.

The poet picked it up and examined it attentively. "Why," he said, with the air of one making a great discovery, "there's a hole in it."

"And my brother made it with a bullet," said Hartley.

"Made it with a bullet? What, did he do that when Simon Sam was running at full speed? Did he spare him purposely?"

"Certainly he did. Would you have had him kill the man?"

"Ahem," said the poet, "I — that is — well, no; but, if the hat was on Simon Sam's head when the shot was fired, as I presume it was, your brother would, in my opinion, have done the world a service by shooting a little lower down!"

If Mr. Simon Sam noted the purport of this rather pointed remark, at least he kept his opinion on the subject to himself. His was such an abject, servile nature that nothing could offend him; so he merely pulled himself together, and reaching for the hat, said: —

"Gentlemen, I shall preserve this as a memento of one of the narrow escapes of my life. Now, if you have no further use for my services, I will recover my gun, which fell from yonder mango tree, and depart to my humble home as soon as I can find my

burro, which was tethered in the mesquites over yonder hill."

"I have no objection," said Arthur, "to your seeking your humble home, provided you will stay in it when you get there; but when a man has a home, as you say you have, why should he perch himself up in mango trees by a roadside to overhear the conversation of unwary travellers? No, sir, before you go you must first give us an explanation of several things which seem to us very mysterious."

"And before you go," added the poet, "I shall exact some guarantee that you will not persecute me any more, Simon Sam, otherwise known as Colonel Pombioso Fuliginoso, attached to the secret service of his Excellency, the President."

"Oho, so that is his name and title, is it? Hearing this reminds me of what I was told in the capital, namely, that the President had ordered you to call out a detail and have yourself shot, the morning after the arrival of the American war vessel. Is that true?"

It was Arthur who asked this rather personal question, and as Mr. Sam saw there was no avoiding it he answered without hesitation.

"It is true, señor, and but for his Excellency's clemency I should now be no more. But he spared my life, as you see, and here I am."

"Yes, I see; but on what condition did he spare your life?"

"I — he — that is — oh, señor, there was no condition. I swear there was not any. See, I go down on my knees to you. There was no condition."

"Humph. A likely story, that. His Excellency is not given to granting such a favor without a certain other favor in return. Speak, now, and tell me all, or I will put a bullet through you."

"Then — But you will kill me if I tell you."

"No, if you tell the truth I will spare you."

"And let me go free, without any further molestation?"

"Yes, on my word; but provided you also seek to do us no further harm."

"Then I will tell you, and this is the truth. Hear me, all saints. Lelee spared my life on the sole condition that I would prevent you and your brother from ever returning alive from this journey."

"So? That is what I suspected. But how did he know we were to come this way? We had taken passage for New York. Did he not know?"

"Oh, yes, he knew; but Lelee is old and cunning. He has the cunning of the evil one himself. He said you might continue on to New York, and then again you might get off the steamer at either Puerto Plata or Cristi, so he sent a man on board ship to watch you, and commanded me to strike across country and lie in wait for you on this road, peradventure you might come this way."

"That was an admirable plan, but as you see it has

miscarried. Now, tell me, have you any accomplices?"

"Not one. I came here alone. And nobody else but Lelee knows of my mission. Nobody but you and your friends with us here."

"That is all. You may go, so far as I am concerned. But if I find that you have played me false or if you should betray our presence here to Lelee, your life will be the forfeit. I will find you and shoot you, wherever you may be in hiding."

"I hear, and you may do so if you find I have proved false. But I dare not live here any longer. I shall go over into Haiti."

XIX.

A Dominican Country Home.

"THAT is the road, Simon Sam, — the road to Haiti, — and the sooner you travel that way the better for all of us. Go now, catch your burro, mount and be off." Thus spake the poet to his erstwhile neighbor and enemy, after the conversation had ended between him and Arthur Strong. "I have a grudge of my own to satisfy; but if you keep your word to the young American and if he can pardon you, — why, so can I. He shall not be more magnanimous than I can be. But go!"

"I go, Alessandro Alix; but as I shall never see my family again I want you to take them word of me. Tell my wife that she will not see me ever again in Santo Domingo, for I shall not cross the line after I have gone over the boundary."

"Yes, I will do so gladly, Simon Sam; but I only wish it were true that you meant what you say, and I am not by any means certain that you will cross the boundary. Bad pennies have a way of turning up when least desired or expected. However, *vaya con Dios*, — go and may God be with you, — provided you are bent on reform."

The little party watched the man out of sight, as he shuffled down the road and climbed the hill beyond which, as he claimed, his donkey was tethered. Not until they had seen him return over the highway leading to Cristi and Haiti, however, did they feel assured that he would take his departure.

"Now, my boys," said the poet, "we have wasted a good deal of time on that worthless specimen of a Dominican, and as the afternoon is well advanced, suppose we saddle up and meander on our journey. I take it you are bound for the Cibao region, or perhaps for Santiago, and as I have a little rancho near the suburbs of the city, I herewith extend to you a most cordial invitation to make my house your home for as long a time as you can stay. Nay, do not refuse us this favor, for have you not put both my daughter and myself under great obligations to you? We are poor — that is, in this world's goods — but we are a happy family, aren't we, Rita, my love?"

"Yes, papa; why should we not be? And I hope the señores will go with us and let me do something to show how grateful I am for their kindness. Mamma and my sisters also will wish to see those who have been our friends on the road; for a favor received by one of our family is held as a favor to all."

"No, no, señorita," exclaimed Hartley, "we have done nothing at all to require any recompense whatever. But as to going with you, if my brother is

agreed, I think it would be the jolliest thing that we could do. What do you say, Arthur?"

"Say? Why, go; by all means. We shall not often get an invitation to join such a charming company, I'm sure. Señorita and señor, we accept with pleasure. Now that our steeds are saddled and you are ready to mount, we shall proceed, provided Miss Rita does not object to travelling in company with these bullocks."

"Of course not," laughed the girl. "Why, at the rancho I ride nothing else, and barebacked, too. Poor papa has had a small herd of bullocks broken in for us all to ride, as there are nearly half a dozen of us girls, besides himself and mamma."

"Half a dozen?" asked Arthur. "And have you no brothers, then?"

"No, not a boy amongst us; and it is true that we are nearly half a dozen, for we are five in all, and I am the youngest."

"Don't you pity me, señores?" asked the poet, pulling a long face and trying to look miserable. "Five daughters, and not one of them married, or ever likely to be, I'm afraid."

"Why, Papa Alix, you naughty man. Aren't you ashamed to talk that way! You know I am not old enough, and as for sisters, I'm sure they are too good for any men of our acquaintance; and besides, you have always been so good to us that we couldn't leave you if we wanted to." The pretty señorita

pouted, and then she blushed shyly, wondering in her innocent little heart if she had said anything wrong.

"Tut, tut, my child. Don't get in a pet. I wouldn't have any of you marry for the world — not while I am alive. What would the old rancho be without its sunshine? Yes, señores, there are five; and their names are: Tomasina, Rosalina, Olivia, Carmen, and last but not by any means least, my Rita, whom alone, of them all, you know."

"And you know only the worst of the five," added Rita, with a mischievous gleam in her sparkling brown eyes. "I'm the tomboy, and being the youngest have been completely spoiled. Have I not, papa?"

She looked demurely at her father, who gravely nodded assent, without seeming to understand what she had said. He was wrapped in his thoughts, apparently, and oblivious to his surroundings. Rita placed a finger at her lips and nodded significantly to the boys, who were riding one on each side her horse.

"See that, now! Isn't it awfully provoking to have such a parent as that? Why, sometimes I am so exasperated I would just like to shake him. But, of course, I wouldn't. Do you know what he is doing now? Why, he is composing poetry. Think of a man of his age writing verses about moonlight and lovers, and all such like silly things! He should

know better, don't you think so? Oh, you may speak out; he won't hear you."

"Well, now," began Arthur, "it must be a great thing to have a poet in the family, especially a great poet."

"Yes; but I'm afraid papa is not a great poet. I should like to think so, of course; but when I compare his poetry with what the really great ones have written, it seems very poor sort of stuff. And then, again, he doesn't get anything for it, unless it is from some tradesman or planter who wants his wares or his products puffed up. Still, it pleases him, and that is something."

"You are quite a philosopher," said Hartley, laughing. "I wish I could look at things as contentedly as you do. Don't you let anything worry you at all?"

"Dear me, yes," said the little lady, quaintly. "Ever so many things trouble me. But it's no use telling you about them; you're only a boy and wouldn't understand, and if you did it would be no use."

In this manner they chatted as they rode along, whiling away the time so pleasantly that it was near night before they became aware the sun was getting toward the western horizon. Then the poet awoke from his revery and, looking about, said: "Off here somewhere there lives a friend of mine, with whom we can pass the night. Ah, there is his rancho, off there at the base of that hill."

Leaping their steeds over the low hedge of pita plants that lined the highway, the quartette galloped up to the door of a lowly hut of three or four rooms and dismounted. A pleasant-looking colored man came to the door as they did so, and welcomed them to the house.

"It is yours," he said with a great air of hospitality, "the house, its owner, and all you see around you. And especially are you welcome, Don Alessandro, and your charming daughter."

The two men embraced, Spanish fashion, poking their heads over each other's shoulders and patting each other on the back, and after this performance was over the young men were introduced. A small troop of boys came from the stable yard and led away the beasts, and in a short time a steaming supper was spread on a big bench under a tamarind tree and the weary travellers invited to partake. After the supper was over the ranchero's wife took Rita away to her room, and the men chatted together over their cigarettes. At least, they all mingled in the conversation, though the boys did not smoke.

The host's plantation was in a bend of the Yaqui, which he told his stranger guests was there called the River of Reeds, because of the beds of tula which bordered its lower banks. He was not inquisitive about them, so they had to answer no awkward questions, and after he and Don Alessandro had finished their smokes and talks, he led the way to their

quarters for the night. A hammock for each, slung from rafters blackened by the smoke of fires for many years, comprised their beds, and in these elastic aboriginal couches they slept soundly till morning.

Awakened at daylight by the vociferous crowing of cocks and cackle of guinea fowl, they tumbled out and went down to the river for a bath, finding coffee awaiting them on their return, and by the time that was disposed of their horses and bullocks were standing saddled beneath the trees ready for departure. The generous host would take nothing for their entertainment, and seemed inclined to be offended at the payment proffered by Arthur, who was paymaster of the expedition and kept strict account of expenses.

"No, no," he said with seeming disgust, "I have not sunk so low as to take pay for hospitality. I am only a poor ranchero, to be sure; but the good God has given me all I need and something more for the entertainment of my friends. *Vaya con Dios señorita and caballeros.* Come see me soon again, for it is lonesome here."

"If we travel hard all day, at night we shall reach my own rancho, señores, and then we will rest after our arduous labors," said Don Alessandro.

And indeed it was a hard day's journey, the road being nearly all the way up hill, before they saw the towers of Santiago's cathedral looming in the dis-

tance, and knew that the end of their jaunt was near. They had lunched that noon by the side of a crystal rivulet and had a merry picnic there; but on the whole, all were rather subdued, on account of fatigue from continued travel. So they welcomed with joy the prospect of a rest, and when Rita turned to the boys and told them that in another half-hour they would be at the rancho, they could not conceal their satisfaction.

"We turn off here," said Don Alessandro, as they reached a hill from which the town of Santiago was fully visible. "There before you is my native place, *Santiago de los Caballeros*, — the City of the Gentlemen, — so called by the first Spaniards who settled here, because it was founded by the choicest soldiers of the Spanish army, many of them hidalgos and all of them men of substance. It is an old city, but not so old as our capital, having been founded about 1504, though its site was known years before."

They cantered through a shady lane lined with frangipanni, century plants, and pita, and finally drew rein at a tumble-down gate beneath an immense silk-cotton tree. Inside the gate was a long, low, one-storied structure made of palm logs and roofed with tiles. It was a rambling, loose-jointed dwelling, evidently with many rooms, for there were many doors and windows opening out upon its broad and all-enclosing verandas.

The sun had set by this time, and the dusk was

gathering; but the dwellers within the house had heard a commotion outside and came to reconnoitre. Then there were screams of joy and welcome, as Don Alessandro and Rita were clasped in half a dozen arms or more, and nearly smothered with kisses. The gate was opened, and in went all, — several servants, who had by this time been aroused, leading the way.

When the members of Don Alessandro's household discovered — after the ardor of their embracings was over — that there were two strangers with their father and sister, they were somewhat abashed, especially as Don Alessandro loudly proclaimed that these two young gentlemen had come on purpose to visit them, having heard the fame of his daughters' beauty in America. They were knights errant, he said, in quest of adventure, and the first thing they had done was to rescue Rita from a runaway, and the next to shoot a hat from Simon Sam's head, *à la* William Tell.

It was then the young men's turn to feel shy, and it is feared that at first they did not enjoy the situation so very much. They had to admit that they had not seen so fine a bevy of girls in all the island, and when nearly a dozen dark eyes were turned on them as they were introduced, they felt they would much rather meet an armed body of men, than endure such a battery of glances. However, the ordeal was soon over. Señora Alix was such a

motherly, sweet-faced lady, and her daughters five so amiable and charming, that the boys were soon at their ease again. And when, an hour later, they all sat down to a bountiful meal on the west veranda, there wasn't a jollier company anywhere in the island.

XX.

Pledged to kill the Tyrant.

"YOU are tired, of course," said Señora Alix, after dinner was over and the girls had retired to their rooms to exchange news of what had happened since Rita's departure. Each of them made a cute little courtesy as she was about to disappear, murmured a "*buena noche, señores*, — good night, sirs" — then vanished from sight.

But though lost to sight they were not by any means beyond ear-shot, for the poet's house, big as it was, had no rooms with dividing walls, and the partitions that separated them were only about ten feet high. So the chatter of the señoritas was audible long after all the others had retired.

Acting upon the suggestion of his wife, Don Alessandro piloted the boys to their room, which like the rest was only a square, box-like apartment with partition half-roof high, a mud floor and palm-thatched rafters overhead. Yes, the floor was of the natural earth, or rather of clay beaten down hard by long usage, and during the daytime the pigs and chickens, turkeys and guinea fowls, marched over it at their own sweet will. But thrown over the loose sack of

straw that served as a bed, was a sheet of fine linen with beautiful Spanish drawn-work a foot deep along its edges, and the pillow-cases were also exquisitely embroidered in the style of the country.

This work, of course, had been done by the young ladies; but, truth to tell, they had few other accomplishments, and like their Spanish-American sisters in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and all Central and South America, they paid less attention to the cultivation of their minds than the representatives of their sex in more northern lands.

But this is neither here nor there. The boys may not have approved altogether of the young ladies and their bringing up, but they recognized the fact that they were in a sense their guests, and that criticism would come with bad grace from them. And again, the girls were very charming, and had natural grace and lovable dispositions which made them seem quite fascinating. They were, in short, warm-hearted, good-natured, but thoughtless young ladies, never having had a real care in their lives, and at the same time never having been spoiled by an excess of riches. The constant battle with poverty, however, had not soured their natures, and this ought to be said to their credit.

Arthur and Hartley tiptoed about on the mud floor quite gingerly, after their shoes and stockings were off, looking for a hook or a nail on which to hang their clothes. But such an object was nowhere visi-

ble, and finally, with a laugh, they threw their "togs" over a hammock swung from the rafters, said their prayers, and went off to sleep, with a sense of great thankfulness for the shelter provided them by Don Alessandro.

In the morning they were awakened by a great commotion in their room, and opening their eyes, saw a queer procession filing through the open doorway. It was headed by a gigantic and consequential turkey gobbler, after whom waddled a big Muscovy duck, followed by a dozen or more hens and roosters, all evidently unfavorably impressed with the new arrivals, for they gave vent to their disapproval in a perfect babel of sounds. They marched around the room subjecting everything in it, particularly the boys' belongings, to a searching examination, and then filed out again, probably to report what they had discovered to the rest of the farmyard throng.

"Was that a dream, Hart," asked Arthur, rubbing his eyes, "or was it a real procession?"

"You would think it rather real, I guess," laughed Hartley, looking over the side of the bed, "if you could see the muddy tracks they have left. But I wouldn't mind it if they had only cleaned out some of the cockroaches. Look at that old beggar over in the corner. Wait a moment till I shy a boot at him. Why, he's almost as big as a sparrow. And there's another. Oh, what was that?"

Hartley had reached out and taken up one of his

boots from the floor, intending to throw it at the cockroach, as already mentioned, when something black and shiny, with a multitude of wriggling legs, slipped between his fingers.

"A centipede, Art! Sure as I'm a sinner. He flashed between my fingers like a streak of lightning. I declare, I'm afraid to get out and dress."

"Oh, pooh, a centipede's sting isn't necessarily fatal," replied Arthur, sitting up in bed and looking about him. "It might give you a little fever, or something of that sort; but that's about all."

"All? Well, that's enough. But look. There's another, running over your pillow. Kill him, Art, before he gets away!"

"Where? Where is he? Ouch! Oh, there he is, making straight for me."

Arthur didn't wait for him to reach his evident destination, but sprang out of bed and seized one of his boots, gazing wildly about him. Hartley followed in short order, and for a moment both were panic-stricken. But the younger boy was the first to recover, and securing a seat in the hammock, he rallied his brother with his own words:—

"Pooh, Art, centipedes aren't necessarily fatal, you know! Let that one sting you if he wants to. It's the nature of the beast, and I don't suppose he will be happy unless he does something of the sort. I wouldn't be afraid of a little thing like that, seems to me."

"Oh, you wouldn't, eh? Well, there's another running along the upper edge of the hammock, and in about half a minute he will be near enough for you to make his acquaintance, if you don't get up. Ha, ha, I thought you wouldn't sit there long," as Hartley rolled from the hammock to the floor with a wild whoop of dismay.

All this commotion brought Don Alessandro to the doorway, and thrusting his head in, he wanted to know what the matter was.

"Centipedes," said Arthur. "Hundreds of them," added Hartley. "Look!"

"Oh, is that all? I thought there was really something the matter," said the poet. "Why, I've lived here all my life and was never stung by them more than forty times. We can't get rid of them, as they live in the thatch and rotten wood of the rafters, like the scorpions, which are almost as numerous as the centipedes. But wait, I'll get you a piece of canvas to stand on while you dress."

He went away, and soon came back with a square of canvas which he spread on the floor, and upon which the boys stood while they put on their clothes; first, however, shaking every article and examining it carefully before getting into it. They saw but one more, which ran out of Arthur's other boot, and this one he "squashed" before it got away. It was a horrid-looking creature, fully four inches long and with venom enough in it, doubtless, to throw either

of them into high fever if it could have used its poison ducts.

Don Alessandro showed them how the mischief was done. He said he had seen one once running across the bare arm of a companion, and had struck at it with a stick he had in his hand. He hit the centipede and knocked it to the floor, but not before it had sunk its claws into the man's flesh and injected poison enough nearly to cause his death.

"They can move like lightning," said Don Alessandro, "and as they seem to know the very second you intend to strike at them they sometimes forestall the act, as did the one which stung my friend. But now you are dressed, come out into the open air and try to forget this disagreeable experience. I will have the room thoroughly searched this morning and make it more presentable for my guests."

The morning was so glorious, with bright beams glancing across the palms, birds singing in the trees and thickets, and the fragrance of flowers filling the air, that the boys soon forgot the bad quarter of an hour they had passed and thought only of the beauties of nature. They sipped their coffee together on the back veranda, and when they had finished, the poet sent for horses, saying that he wished to take them for a ride.

As they cantered along between half-wild hedges of pita plant, Don Alessandro told them something of the history of the country. The city of Santiago,

he said, which was visible only a few miles away, was the centre of a region containing about forty thousand inhabitants, mostly agriculturists, and was once a very important place. At present it is languishing from lack of enterprise and the stagnation of business caused by the President's opposition to progress.

"We will come around back that way," said Don Alessandro, "and I will show you some of the sights. Meanwhile, I am now taking you to see the ruins of Jacagua, the first settlement on this island after the city of Isabella was founded. It was once quite a town, but earthquakes threw down its walls, and the Spaniards left it to look for gold in the hills, so nothing remains to-day but a heap or two of stones and the city well."

He led the way into a field near the road and pointed out several heaps of stone and mortar, overgrown with wild fig trees and prickly pears. One shapeless heap represented the church, another the king's storehouse, and still another the city hall, and amongst the ruins were scattered fragments of pottery and tiles that had once covered the roofs of the buildings.

After inspecting the site of a city founded by Columbus, and which ought to be interesting to all students of this country's history, Don Alessandro completed the trip by making a détour to Santiago de los Caballeros. The "City of the Gentlemen"

has sadly deteriorated since early Spanish times, and there are very few white people resident there at the present time; but traditions still remain of its ancient glory. Riding through a paved street lined with mean-looking dwellings, Don Alessandro finally stopped in front of a house that at one time had made some pretence to architectural beauty. It was one-storied, to be sure, but the doorway was large and the walls were of stone, with carved cornices, and a balcony jutting out from a dormer window.

A gentleman sat within the doorway, apparently very old and very feeble. He was introduced as Don Pablo Orerotundo, a descendant of one of the original *conquistadores* who had come over directly after the West Indies were discovered.

At the request of their guide he showed the boys an ancient parchment bearing testimony to the proud lineage of his ancestor, which he, the last of his line, still preserved with care. A flash of dignity came into the old man's eyes as he told of the stock from which his family had sprung, but it instantly died out as he said: —

"But I am the last, señores. I, only, remain, and in a little while I too will be gone; and of what use is that musty parchment or this suit of ancient armor which my ancestor once wore?"

He pointed to a suit of mail that hung on the wall, above which was a pair of crossed swords. "Do you see those swords?" he asked. "They were brought

here by the conquistadores. They are veritable 'Toledos,' made by the Moors before the Spaniards reconquered their native land, perhaps eight hundred years ago; maybe nine, for I have forgotten everything of that sort. But they are Toledos, and I will ask Don Alessandro to take them down and show them to you."

Having done as requested, Don Alessandro passed the swords to their owner, who took them, one in each hand, and bent them nearly double to show their strength and elasticity. They were nearly five feet in length, each one with a cross and basket-hilt. Arthur's eyes flashed as the old man passed one of the swords to him, for he loved a weapon of tried steel, and grasped this one as though it were a pearl of great price.

The old man noticed that and said: "Ha, so you love a sword? You can appreciate this weapon with a history? Then, señor, I shall ask you to accept it from me as a gift. Yes, do not say no, for there is no one in this miserable town who would care for it. And since there are two swords, and you are two brothers, this second weapon shall belong to the younger boy." So saying, he pressed the swords upon them, in such a way that they could not be refused.

XXI.

Swords of the Conquistadores.

THE boys turned to Don Alessandro for advice, and he told them to have no hesitation in accepting the swords as gifts. "It is true, as Don Pablo says, there is no one here who would more highly appreciate them than yourselves. But I think he has, in return, a request to make of you, if I mistake not."

"Not a request," said the old man, in a loud, clear voice, "but a command. I can see that the elder boy is an accomplished swordsman. He need not make a pass to prove that to me, for the manner of his handling the weapon shows it. And it is upon him I would lay my command, which is this: Improve the first opportunity you have to flesh that sword in the body of a tyrant. Who? Oh, there is but one tyrant in Santo Domingo. You know!"

"Yes," replied Arthur, steadily, "I know; but I cannot accept the sword with this condition. I — we — have suffered at his hands; but we do not desire revenge. You must take it back, señor."

"And this, also," joined in Hartley; "much as I

should value the sword for its history and itself, I cannot retain it, though greatly obliged to you, señor, for your courtesy."

The old man made a gesture of impatience. "No, no, you will keep the swords; and what is more, one of you shall stain one of them with the blood of the tyrant or his emissary. You cannot evade your destiny. It is written on the scroll. I have been waiting for you to come for many years, for the man to avenge our slaughtered islanders. I cannot read all this on the scroll. But that you will fight him, hand to hand and foot to foot — that is written. And you will prevail. Now I am content, Alessandro. The sword of the conquistador has come into the hands of its master — this young man."

As Don Pablo spoke he had the air of one peering into futurity, the rapt gaze of the seer. He stood erect, and the years seemed to roll away from him, leaving him almost young in appearance.

"Take the swords," said Don Alessandro, "if only to gratify his whim. He is a monomaniac on the subject of Lelee, for he killed his son, and ever since that event, Don Pablo has had no rest."

"Yes, he killed my son," said Don Pablo, catching at a portion of Don Alessandro's speech. "Lelee killed my only son, my heart's treasure, the solace of my old age. Oh, what would I not give to bring him to the grave! But there are no men left in this island now. Lelee has killed them all, — else some

one would hunt him down and slay him like the beast he is. But you will?" turning to Arthur. "You will rid the world of this carrion? Say you will."

"I cannot promise," replied Arthur, gently. "But I feel for you, I do, indeed. And if Lelee compels me, as you say he will, I will fight him to the death. But only in self-defence; not otherwise."

"Very well. But if you had seen what I have seen, you would not think it a crime to kill Lelee. I have seen a whole regiment shot down by his orders. He had suspected it of being disloyal to him, and with the rest of his army, he surrounded it while out on parade. He made a speech to the soldiers, saying that all the officers of their regiment had been found disloyal, and accordingly ordered them shot. This was done by the soldiers, who were then told that the non-commissioned officers were also disloyal, and that they must shoot them, — which they did. He then divided the regiment up into squads and had one squad shoot another, until the entire regiment was destroyed! That was Lelee, the man who killed my son. You may ask why I do not seek to kill him myself. Because I cannot get at him. I am too well known; and, besides, I am too old to seek him out; my strength is not sufficient."

"Well, Don Pablo," said Alessandro, "we must be going, for the good wife has our breakfast awaiting by this time. Thank you for the courtesy to my

guests. Rest assured, they shall give a good account of the Toledos."

The boys added their thanks to their host's, mounted their horses and rode away. Don Pablo stood watching them until they had turned a corner of the street, then, with a sad shake of his head, sat down and buried his face in his hands, in which position he remained a long, long while.

"What did Don Pablo mean by the 'scroll'?" asked Hartley of the poet, as they rode homeward.

"Scroll? Oh, ah, yes," replied the poet, awakening from one of his frequent fits of abstraction. "Why, he meant a scroll of life, which he has seen in his visions. He is visionary, as of course you must have seen, and he has dwelt so long on the death of his son, and planned so long how to avenge it, that he thinks he has been shown the right way to accomplish his purpose in the end."

"But how came he to fix upon me as the medium of his vengeance?" asked Arthur.

"*Quien sabé?*" rejoined the poet, shrugging his shoulders. "Who knows? I suppose, though, he had seen some one like you in his dreams, and when you appeared in the flesh he was struck by the resemblance. Still, do not treat the matter lightly, my friend. Remember that Don Pablo, from long contemplation of things spiritual and removed from earth, is a mystic, and that more importance should attach to his visions than to ordinary dreams. For

myself, I fully believe that what he has predicted of you will come to pass."

"What? That I shall fight the President with this sword? That is impossible, Don Alessandro."

"No, my son, not impossible. Improbable, perhaps, but still within the realm of conjecture. More things that seemed less likely to occur have come to pass in my own experience."

"I trust this will not," answered Arthur, seriously.

"It must not, of course," added Hartley, visibly affected at the prospect, though so remote, of his brother's life imperilled. "Art, dear, I shall never leave you. If he fights you he must fight me, too."

Arthur darted a grateful glance at his brother, and then laughed.

"Well, Hart, we will not worry over a thing so remote. I don't say but that the taking off of Lelee would be a good thing for his people; but I don't want to be the cause of it, I'm sure."

"If it is so fated, you must," interposed the poet. "But don't bother. The world is good, and God reigns. Enjoy what is at hand. Ha, see, there are my daughters waiting at the gate. All of them, too. I wonder what mischief is in the air now? Something important, I know from their appearance. Well, Tomasina," said he, addressing the eldest of his daughters, a young miss of over twenty, with

laughing black eyes and sprightly aspect, "what is it now?"

"What's what, papa?" asked Tomasina, demurely. "How do you know anything is 'it.' I've a good mind not to speak to you again to-day."

"Oh, come, come, don't be offended. I meant that I would grant any reasonable request, — that is, any that doesn't involve spending any money, you know. Not that I wouldn't like to, but I haven't it to spend."

"No, papa," said Olivia, the second daughter, coming to her sister's assistance, "it isn't that. But we have been planning a little picnic to take place to-morrow, and you must go with us."

"Yes," continued Rosalina, the next in age, taking up the thread of the story. "That is it, a picnic, — to come off at Concepcion de la Vega, and a visit to the shrine on the hill."

"Really, papa," added Carmencita, the youngest but one, "you ought to do something for us, it is so long since any of us have been outside the rancho."

"And," finally finished Rita, the youngest of all, and consequently the most privileged, — that is, the most spoiled — "and you go off with the señores and leave us all moping at home. Papa, it is too bad, really it is. Consider, Papa Alix, that it was I who discovered the señores, and if it hadn't been for me, you might never have met them."

"No, you might never have met them," said all

the others in a chorus, "and yet you don't give us a chance to speak to them."

"Well," exclaimed the poor poet, after this composite tirade had ended, "did you ever hear anything like that before?" He turned to the boys, who had fallen a little behind him and who sat on their horses enjoying the scene most hugely. They laughed, but did not reply, not knowing what sort of an answer to make, and he continued. "That is what I have to endure almost every day. I, the most indulgent of fathers, am treated like a common enemy. Why, my darlings," turning again to his daughters, "you had only to ask of me what you wanted, to have your request granted instantly."

This announcement was followed by a shout of derision from the girls behind the gate; but they chattered and nodded their pretty heads to each other eagerly, finally saying: "He has agreed to go, after all. Hurrah, our scheme was a grand success!"

Then they hastened to open the gate and let the travellers in, their eyes gleaming with fun and running over with merriment.

"Oh, but the swords!" exclaimed Rosalina, catching sight of the two Toledos in the young men's hands.

"Don Pablo's swords, too," said Tomasina, breathlessly. "Did he give them to you freely, señores, or—or with a pledge?" The merriment faded out of her

face and the chatter was instantly hushed, for the girls knew well for what purpose Don Pablo had been keeping those swords, all the years since his son was killed.

"Don't do it," said Rita, addressing Arthur. "Don't risk your life in an encounter with that base man, señor."

"Pooh!" said Tomasina. "He risks nothing. I only wish I were a man! I would seek him out and compel him to fight me! Think you not that God would be on my side? Give me the swords, señores, and I will polish them for you. They shall shine so that they will dazzle his eyes, and the only spot upon the one that is used shall be made by his foul blood staining it."

She reached up and took the Toledos from the young man, and bore them off proudly to polish them up as she had promised.

"Bravo, Tomasina!" said the poet, as tears leaped to his eyes. "What would I not give if you were indeed a son, instead of a daughter."

"If that encounter ever does come off," said Arthur, following the girl with admiring eyes, "I would ask for no better second than your eldest daughter, Señor Alix."

"Faith, she is gentle enough," replied the poet. "But, indeed, I do believe she would dare fight Lelee single-handed. But dismount. I see that my good señora has breakfast awaiting us, as I said to Don

Pablo she would have when we arrived. Turn the horses loose; they will find their fodder and some one to unsaddle them. Come in." By the time all were seated around the breakfast table, they had recovered their spirits, and not a word was said that did not tend to obliterate the impression which the sight of the Toledos had made upon their minds.

The girls were overflowing with fun again, and narrated with great glee to their mother how they had compelled their father to capitulate. "Oh, it was such a lark," declared Rita. "We charged down upon him all in a body, and fairly took his breath away. Didn't we, papa?"

"Faith, señores," said the poet, appealing to the brothers, "would it not be likely to take anybody's breath away, to have such a pack of tomboys fall upon him, as though he were indeed an enemy, rather than the kind parent I am known to be? And such a spectacle, too, for the señores to witness."

"Oh, they enjoyed it, I'm sure," rejoined Rita, looking across the table to the silent young men. "Of course we're tomboys, all of us. What else could one expect of girls who have never been away from such a forlorn old rancho as this in their whole lives?"

XXII.

A Picnic on the Royal Plain.

"RITA, my darling, do not say that," chided the mother, gently.

"Well, what I meant was to stay any length of time, or to go to school."

"But you have had your own governesses, dear, and have not been brought up entirely in ignorance, as your remarks might imply."

"Yes, but what do governesses signify? I want to see the world." And the spoiled child pouted. Then she seemed to forget her grievance all at once, and turning to Arthur, asked him why, when he had the whole world to choose from, he should select their poor little island to visit. He answered by saying that, to him, the island was one of the most interesting spots in the world, on account of the great events that had transpired there.

"Great events? What great things have happened here, señor?" Her eyes opened wide, and her sisters, too, were all attention.

"Why, those connected with the discovery of America and the first settlements in this hemisphere, señorita. As your father can tell you, it

was through this very section that the invading army of Spaniards, under Columbus, marched to the conquest of the Indians in 1494. Right within the bounds of your own rancho one of the first towns was founded, you know."

"No, I don't know. Papa never tells us anything. He thinks we can't understand him, I suppose. But I want to know all about it, and so do sisters, don't we, children?" They signified the desire to learn more of their island's history, and after much urging, the boys went with them out to the veranda that overlooked the garden, where many gay flowers bloomed and humming-birds flitted about in shining coats, and they all sat down together.

"The real invasion of this part of the island," began the young historian, "was nearly a year after the first city was founded, which Columbus called Isabella. While he was absent in Cuba, many atrocities had been committed and many Indians made captive, — some say about five hundred, — whom Columbus, instead of setting free, sent to Spain as slaves. This was one of the first acts of Columbus that may be set down against him as cruel and rapacious. The natural result was that other Indians, hearing of the treatment given their neighbors, rebelled against their Spanish masters, including those under a great cacique named Guarionex, who was lord of all this region from the Yaqui to the Gulf of Samana.

"Some of his subjects having stolen a few trifles

from the Spaniards, the commander of the forces in the field caught them, cut off their ears, and sent them to the town of Isabella, with a request that Columbus make an example of them and cut off their heads. This final act of cruelty was not performed, but many of the Indians were now excited and restless, and further atrocities by the Spaniards brought about their revolt.

"Cacique Guarionex was induced to rise against the Spaniards by the wanton acts of a small band of soldiers who had been quartered upon him, and who in return were slain by the indignant chief and his men. Instead of calmly investigating the complaints of the Indians, Columbus took sides with his fellow-countrymen and supported them in their enormities, while the wrongs of the Indians were allowed to go unredressed, until, finally, even Indian human nature could endure no more, and several caciques of the interior joined with Guarionex for a grand assault upon their enemies.

"The effective force of Columbus at that time did not amount to more than two hundred men, infantry and cavalry, but they were clad in iron armor, and armed with cross-bows, arquebuses, swords, lances, and pikes, and, in addition, had the support of packs of fierce bloodhounds. About the last of March, 1495, the two brothers, Christopher and Bartholomew Columbus, set out from Isabella at the head of their band of human brutes and bloodhounds to

meet an army of Indians, estimated at more than a hundred thousand. They came up with them somewhere in this very region, perhaps on the site of your own rancho, and as the poor Indians were mostly naked, and had no arms but bows and arrows, stone spears and battle-axes, they made short work of them.

"No doubt they were brave enough, but when the red men saw the arquebuses spitting out fire and smoke, and were mowed down by the bullets, they were at first astounded, then terrified. And when the cavalry charged upon them, the Indians took the horses, which they had never seen before, for supernatural creatures, and fled in wild dismay. Then the cruel Spaniards let loose the fierce bloodhounds, who tore all they could catch to pieces, rending them limb from limb. So the Indians fled in terror to the mountains, and the Spaniards won a great victory, though many of the poor creatures reassembled again farther up this valley, on what is called the Royal Plain."

"Where we are going to-morrow," said Tomasina, who, like the rest, had been a breathless listener to the terrible deeds of their ancestors as narrated by the young stranger. "It makes me despise the Spaniards of those days," added the outspoken Tomasina. "And to think that we may have some of their blood in our veins, sisters! Isn't it awful?"

"Oh, well," said the philosophic Rita, "we have

Indian blood in our veins, too, according to our genealogical tree; so what shall we do about it? There are five of us, half Spanish and half Indian; if there were only six we might divide and fight it out."

"How monstrous!" said Olivia. "You and Tom might fight it out, as you call it; but none of the rest of us would, I'm sure."

"I'd fight," declared Tomasina, readily; "but it wouldn't be one of my own kin. I would do as the poor Indians did in defence of my home." And then she added in a lower tone, "It may be that we shall have to do it yet, if the tyrant goes on much longer unchecked."

"Tut, tut," said her father, coming up just in time to hear this declaration. "Don't talk treason, Tom. Go, now, all of you, to help your mamma prepare for to-morrow, for, faith, there is much to do."

All the day long, at the rancho, there was baking and frying, and in the evening a packing of hampers and saddle-bags with good things for the picnic on the morrow. When the day dawned it found everybody not only awake but out and ready to start, for while the distance to be traversed was not great, perhaps about fifteen miles, the road leading to the Royal Plain was probably one of the worst highways in the whole world.

The sun had hardly darted a ray over the hills to the east of the rancho ere the cavalcade — provided a collection of bullocks, as well as horses, may be called

a cavalcade — was ready to start. There were two packhorses — which in this instance were donkeys — laden with every sort of provision known to the islanders, and they went ahead, without either saddle or bridle on, being trusty brutes without any guile at all in their composition. Close behind them came good Señora Alix, who wished to be near the "carga burros" for the purpose of keeping an eye upon the pots and pans and stores of provisions, which she had with so much labor provided. She was mounted on a bullock, and straggling after her came all her lovely daughters, each one seated on a big straw *aparejo* or straw saddle of the island, firmly fastened to the back of a similar animal.

The boys were astride their own particular bovines, to whom they had by this time become quite attached, and the rear of the procession was brought up by two colored servants mounted upon two diminutive burros, bareback, and finally the master of the rancho himself. Thirteen dumb beasts and eleven people comprised the company that set out so early that bright morning for the Royal Plain.

At the starting, the air was cool, fragrant with odors of frangipanni, and vocal with bird music; but as the sun mounted higher and higher, dissipating the dews of morning and wilting all before him, the spirits of the company sank correspondingly in inverse ratio to his ascent.

And the trail they followed, called by courtesy "*el*

camino real," — the king's highway, — who could do justice to the horrors of that road? It had been laid out by the first Spaniards to traverse this section four hundred years before, and had been used ever since; but it was worse now than at the very beginning, for it had holes in it two or three feet deep, and the holes were filled with mud and water which splashed over the travellers as their beasts sank their feet within them. The scenery along the road, running as it did through beautiful forests, and past plantations of plantains and bananas, was attractive; but who could pay any attention to scenery, when eyes and ears were filled with mud and water?

All were glad when at last the van of the procession turned aside from the trail and entered a scrubby growth of mangos and guava bushes. The trees met over their heads, and now and then there were glimpses of ruined walls of brick and mortar, which Don Alessandro said were the last vestiges of the fort Columbus had erected here in 1495 and called Concepcion de la Vega.

Corralling all the animals within the brick walls of the ancient fort, the tired travellers dismounted and dispersed themselves over the grassy level beneath the trees. Banana leaves were cut and spread on the ground as tablecloths, and upon them were spread out the viands which Doña Alix had prepared with her own hands. No second invitation was needed to surround the banana leaves and fall to,

for all were hungry and did ample justice to the bountiful repast. After that, when Don Alessandro had lighted his cigarette, and the girls were engaged with their mother in clearing away the remains of the feast, the poet narrated the history of the place in which they had temporarily pitched their camp.

"After the first great battle with the Indians," he said, "and while there was a lull in the storm, Don Bartholomew and Don Christopher Columbus improved the time by erecting a strong fort on this site, which they called Concepcion de la Vega. They brought bricks from Isabella which had been made in old Spain, and they built a fort after the most approved style of the age in which they lived. They garrisoned it with their brave soldiers, and none too soon, for the forces of Guarionex which they had dispersed reassembled and attacked them in their stronghold. It was no use, however, for the Indians were driven away and around the fort gathered quite a settlement. That old tower rising over there amongst the palms is all that remains of the first church erected here, and only a few years ago the bell which once called the people to prayer was discovered hanging in the branches of a wild fig tree.

"An earthquake destroyed the town and shook down the walls of the fort in 1565, and ever since the place has been in ruins and, they say, haunted by the ghosts of the departed *caballeros*. Yes, señores, they have been met here, and not many

years ago whole troops of them, and when saluted they would take off their hats very courteously, but with their hats off came their heads, also. Ugh, I don't want to meet those ghosts of the hidalgos who perished here, my friends, for such a meeting portends dire disaster."

In the afternoon they all remounted their beasts and rode up the hill called "El Cerro," six hundred feet in height, and on the summit of which is a votive chapel. They attracted much attention from the few natives living here, who flocked out to sell them silver charms, amulets, and bottles of healing water from a wonderful spring which had the reputation of turning everything into glass that fell or was thrown into it. Near the church stands a ragged old walnut tree, beneath which, according to tradition, the great Columbus stood and viewed the triumph of his army over the Indians when, for the third and last time, they attempted to drive the invaders away.

This battle was the consummation of the Indians' woes, for they were decisively defeated, and ever after that they were the Spaniards' slaves. They planted their fields for them, and toiled in the mines until they dropped dead from fatigue and all perished.

XXIII.

San Cocho, a Feast without Forks.

THE view outspread from the porch of the little church on the summit of the Santo Cerro, or Holy Hill, is one of the finest in the world.

So Columbus said, when for the first time he gazed upon it from beneath the walnut tree which is still known as the "nispero de Colon," and the few travellers who have been favored with this view have fully indorsed his opinion. For the hill rises six hundred feet sheer above a vast plain which envelops it on every side. Over this plain are scattered thousands upon thousands of royal palm trees, and amid them the thatched huts of the farmers peer out from their bowers of flowers and foliage. It was called by Columbus the *Vega Real*, or Royal Plain, and will forever hold the preëminence for beauty that induced him to bestow upon it the regal title.

After the boys had feasted their eyes upon this beautiful landscape, Don Alessandro said they must be going if they would reach home before night, as he desired to pay his respects to some people on the way and to invite them to spend the morrow at the rancho.

So they set out on the return journey, reaching home without accident and finding themselves as hungry as bears when they arrived. It was to the great credit of the horses, burros, and bullocks that they behaved with eminent discretion all the way out and back, save only for the beast ridden by Rosalina, which attempted to run away with its fair charge. She was, however, rescued by Hartley, just on the brink of a steep bank where a fall might have been very dangerous. Thus there were two of Don Alessandro's daughters who were likely to regard these young men in the light of heroes, and a continued stay at the rancho might cause their acquaintance to ripen into friendship.

It was to this effect that the boys spoke to Don Alessandro that night, after the girls had all retired and the house was quiet: "We must soon be going, señor," Arthur said to him as they sat on the veranda. "It is delightful here and we should like to stay for weeks; but at the same time the season is advancing, the rains will soon be here, and we must improve the dry weather."

"Tush! nonsense!" replied the poet. "What business can you have in the mountains to take you away from a place where all are devoted to you? It must be urgent, faith. Why, my sons, the girls will cry their eyes out. They haven't had such a good time for years."

"We should like to think so, of course," rejoined

Arthur; "and if we could be of any service by staying, we would surely stay."

"Well, Art, you might, if you wanted to," said Hartley, "but as for me I'm going into the mountains, even if all the girls in the island weep at our departure. Don Alessandro, you are so hospitable that I really believe you would keep us the rest of the year."

"Faith, my son, I certainly would, for I like you both, and also my people like you, and that is enough with us here. We have not riches, we have very few enjoyments, but at least we are sincere."

"I believe it, señor, and we would gladly stay; but to-morrow, or next day at the farthest, we must really start on our journey."

"Well, so be it," said the poet, with a sigh. "But first you are going to have a taste of a country barbecue — what we call a '*san cocho*,' or feast without forks. It is a sort of picnic, to which we shall invite our neighbors, and I think you will find it novel, if not interesting."

"I'm sure we shall," said Arthur. "And it will make another favor for which we shall be indebted to you. I've heard of the *san cocho*, but have never yet tried one. It will be a new experience to me."

"And to me, also," said Hartley. "It is just the thing I wanted to try. How clever of you, Don Alessandro, to think of it."

"Not at all," replied the poet. "It was the most natural thing in the world. The *san cocho* is one of our 'institutions,' as you Yankees say, and I would not think of allowing you to go away without having tried it. But it is late, señores; let us to bed; and may you have better rest than you had last night. I must go out to see that all is prepared for the morrow. *Buenas noches* — sleep well."

As their room had been well attended to during the preceding day, the boys found but few pernicious insects to interfere with their rest, and the next morning awoke refreshed. Another glorious dawn, as perfect as that of yesterday, greeted them on going into the open air. At coffee all the young ladies joined them, fresh as flowers, and radiant at the prospect of another picnic. They chatted amongst themselves in the bright, birdlike way they had, and now and then threw a question at the young men; but it was very evident that they did not view with favor the contemplated departure of their guests, and that they resented it. There was a certain shyness in their behavior and an air of constraint, which spoke louder than words, and impressed the young men painfully. But although they surmised the cause of it to be the rejection of their hospitality, they did not falter in their determination to set out for the mountains the very next day.

There was bustle and activity all the forenoon at the rancho of Don Alessandro Alix, for more than a

score of invitations had been sent out, and long before noon the neighbors began to arrive. Some were black and some were colored, as to their complexions, and but two or three of them were white; but all came eagerly and joyfully to partake of Don Alessandro's *san cocho*, for the making of which he was famous throughout Santiago province. Indeed, it was said that his fame as a master "*san cochero*" had extended far beyond the borders of the province, and that those high and mighty in authority would be only too glad to sit down at his festive board. Be that as it may, high noon found all the banqueters arrived, and out under the double row of mango trees in the garden a table, made of boards supported upon trestles, more than forty feet in length.

Out in the corral were the various animals that had been ridden in by the invited guests: burros, bullocks, and scraggy ponies, hitched to posts, and each beast with a big bundle of *maloja* or cane fodder piled up before it. The flies were numerous out in the corral, and the sun poured down a flood of caloric; but the poor beasts did not seem tc mind it, having become used to flies and sun through long experience. The boys thought the *aparejos* or straw saddles ought to be removed, if no other provision were made for the animals' comfort; but when they spoke to Don Alessandro about it, he laughed at the suggestion.

"Ah, you Americanos," he said with a patronizing

smile. "You spoil all your beasts by kind treatment. I have heard that there is no country on earth where horses, for instance, are better cared for and more petted than in the States, and yet they are the worst kickers in the world. Now, our horses and bullocks are all so well disciplined that they never kick under any provocation whatever. Not even the mules will kick, señores, nor the burros. And do you know why? Well, it is because we show them, early and often, that we are their masters. Yes, we are cruel, I admit, but it is better to be cruel to the beast than to yourself. We ride our horses with sharp spurs and bits that would break their jaws if force were employed, and we do it because we are the riders, and not the horses. If we did not use force and make them understand we were likely to kill them if they did not obey our slightest wish, they would become stubborn and unruly like those *caballos Americanos*."

The boys rather demurred at this, but Don Alessandro shook his head at their suggestion to take the rings out of their bullocks' nostrils and guide them by means of bridles.

"Don't do it," he said quite earnestly. "Don't do it; for if you do they will run away with you and perhaps throw you over the first precipice they come across. But come with me. I want to show you a lovely sight."

The boys followed their host to an open shed back

of the house, beneath the thatched roof of which stood a dome-shaped "*horno*" or oven, made of clay, about four feet high, and with a small opening in one side stopped up with a great flat tile. Kicking aside the earthen tile, Don Alessandro looked in, then withdrew, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"Look inside, my sons, and you will see the prettiest pair of pigs that ever graced a *san cocho*."

Stooping down they did as directed, and saw reposing upon the smooth clay floor of the *horno* a pair of small "porkers," each with a corn-cob in its mouth and with feet curled up as if in supplication, being toasted a most beautiful brown.

"Isn't that a lovely sight?" asked Don Alessandro. "Faith, it is such a pretty theme for a poem that I believe I'll write one while the little darlings are roasting and take it in with them to my guests. My sons, I shall now retire to my den, which is out there beyond the acacia trees. But, as you value my friendship, my sons, do not lisp a word as to my whereabouts, for my muse is a jealous mistress, and my wife has strict orders not to interrupt us while we are in sweet communion. Go you to the festal board, and partake of the viands that shall be offered you, and if inquiry is made for Don Alessandro, the Poet of the Sierras, say you nothing, for I shall appear in due time, bearing aloft that beautiful pair, and with an effusion that will be as sauce to the meats. Faith, my sons, I believe my *Poem on the Pigs* may

yet make me immortal, for I feel stirring within me the divine afflatus. Go. But stay a moment. If my wife asks of you where I am, tell her I am not to be disturbed, and will appear in due time. She will understand."

The young men did as directed, and when they arrived at the place where the table was spread found the guests already assembled and awaiting their coming. At the head of the table sat Señora Alix and on each side of her a long row of expectant guests: men, women, and numerous children, dispersed amongst whom were the five lovely Señoritas Alix, who also looked, not only expectant, but decidedly uneasy.

Tomasina motioned the boys to take seats, one on each side of her, facing Rita and Rosalina. Carmen and Olivia looked disappointed, when they saw the disposition made of their guests, for they were left without an opportunity even to speak to them. But there was no time to lose, since three great steaming dishes of food were on the table, and everybody seemed anxious to begin operations, — especially the children, who were not at all backward in announcing their wants.

Señora Alix and two of her daughters then served the contents of the tureens, and soon each guest had before him or her a plateful, to which strict attention was paid until the ravenous appetites seemed somewhat satisfied. Then [illegible]amble for the

tureens, each guest thrusting a hand into the nearest dish and drawing out a bit of meat, a bone, or chicken wing, and depositing it on the plate of the person sitting within reach.

This seemed to the boys quite an unconventional proceeding (to put it mildly) and not altogether appetizing. They didn't mind much when Tomasina thrust in her dainty fingers and pulled out a choice morsel, which she placed upon their plates; but when a burly peasant did the same they rather recoiled, for his hands were neither dainty nor clean. Still, as their motto had ever been, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," they rallied quickly and followed fashion, fishing out tidbits from the tureen opposite, and dropping them on their neighbors' plates, much to the satisfaction of the recipients.

After all had been helped in this fashion, there was a lull in the proceedings, and everybody now looked anxiously in the direction of the *horno*, where by this time the little pigs should be done to a turn and ready to serve.

XXIV.

The Poem and the Little Pigs.

"I WONDER where papa is?" said Tomasina to Arthur, who sat on her right. "He should have been here long ago, of course; and, moreover, he gave orders this morning that no one but he should serve the sucking pigs which are roasting out in the *horno*."

Both Arthur and Hartley felt very uneasy about this time, and also rather guilty, since they were the only ones at the table who knew the whereabouts of the recreant host. But what could they do? He had made them promise not to divulge his hiding-place to any one but the señora, and even then not in so many words.

"If I may speak to the señora," answered Arthur to Tomasina's indirect question, "perhaps I can enlighten her without betraying a trust."

The girl gazed at him in astonishment, then a look of enlightenment came over her face and she laughed. "Why, certainly you may, Don Arturo. But you need say no more, for I have guessed what it is already. Oh, my dear, foolish papa." Then she said, raising her voice: "Mamma, I believe papa's

gone off to his den to write a poem and has forgotten those pigs entirely. Is it not so, señor?"

Arthur looked at his brother and both burst out laughing, for they could not help it. "Better confess, Art," said Hartley. "Come, out with it."

"No," replied Arthur, "I shall not tell. But señorita," — turning to Tomasina, — "I will say this much: I fear your father has forgotten the pigs."

"Of course he has," declared Señora Alix and her daughters, in chorus. "He always forgets, — poor papa," said Olivia, with such a comical grimace that all the guests at table, big and little, fell to laughing, and for the moment quite forgot their disappointment.

"But somebody must get the pigs," said the señora. "Dear me, they will be burnt to a crisp. Don Theodore," she added, addressing a man near her, "won't you kindly come to the rescue?"

"With pleasure, señora," replied Don Theodore; and away he went.

Now, to improve the occasion and fill the interim while Don Theodore is absent, we may as well inspect the contents — such as are left — of the tureens, for they alone are held to make a real *san cocho* a grand success without the addition of anything else.

Each tureen held what the Italians would call an "*olla podrida*" or a little of all sorts. The West Indians have a similar dish in universal use and

great esteem, which they call "pepper-pot," or *casareep*, and it is made as follows: Into a large earthen vessel are thrown the odds and ends of meats from time to time, perhaps for months, such as bits of pork, chicken wings, etc. Ordinarily these accumulations would decay in a very short time, for meats do not keep more than a day or two in the tropics, on account of the heat. But these are kept from decaying by a preparation of cassava juice, which is a deadly poison when raw or crude, but becomes wholesome and an antiseptic, or preventive of decay, when subjected to heat. The poisonous property of the cassava evaporates when boiled, and leaves the "farina," from which flour is made, and the juice both harmless and palatable. This was one of the many discoveries of the Indians who lived in these islands before the first white men came.

The objectionable custom of taking a tidbit out of the pot with one's fingers is considered a mark of high esteem and hospitality, so that the boys did just right in reciprocating, and would have deeply offended their genial hosts if they had not eaten the morsels placed in this manner upon their plates.

But here comes Don Theodore, bearing aloft a huge trencher upon which recline the unfortunate porkers. His appearance is saluted with a chorus of "ohs" and "ahs" from the juvenile members of the company, and with exclamations of disappointment from Señora Alix and her daughters, when they see

that the hapless animals have been burned literally as black as one's hat.

"My precious little piggies," moaned the good señora. "To think they should have met such a fate as that! *Ay de mi* — alas is me — what a husband that is of mine!" And she wept, actually shed tears, as she saw the charred remains brought in and laid before her. The daughters all joined in the general lamentation; but the gallant Don Theodore, who was an amiable gentleman of middle age, an admirer of the eldest daughter, as in duty bound reminded her that, while the skins might be rather black and overdone, yet, no doubt, the meat was palatable.

And sure enough, when the trenchers had been placed upon the board and the charred skins removed, the flesh was found to be the most delicious that had ever been offered at any *san cocho* within the memory of man — or woman, too, as to that matter. It was not very long, in fact, before the little porkers were deprived of nearly all the toothsome meat that covered their ivory ribs, and stripped even to their "trotters." From hand to hand passed fragrant fragments shredded from them, and the plates of the American guests were piled high with votive offerings which they neither had the courage to refuse nor to devour. Their sudden loss of appetite was overlooked in the general rejoicing, and they were not chided for what would have been con-

sidered on ordinary occasions a serious breach of hospitality.

Even Señora Alix was rendered happy by the unexpected turn of affairs, and shed tears again — this time of joy — to think that, after all, her darling piggies had not lived and died in vain. And after all was over, — after the pair had been reduced to less than the dimensions of a single porker, and while everybody was resting on his laurels, so to speak, — there appeared the delinquent Don Alessandro, hatless and almost breathless, waving above his head a manuscript apparently several yards in length.

There was an instant hush, the hum of conversation and the clashing plates suddenly ceased, and for once in his life the poet had an attentive audience. He could not have appeared at a more propitious time, for everybody had eaten to repletion and was in that blissful state of contentment which has been declared to be better than wealth. One of the guests offered him a bench and he sat down, but when pressed to partake of the remains yet on the table, he refused with a great show of impatience.

"His head is in the clouds," whispered Tomasina to the boys. "He has forgotten all about the pigs, and as for eating, he would sooner think of flying."

And so it seemed, for Don Alessandro had that far-away look in his eyes which is said to indicate the true poet. Commanding attention, he rose and read to his guests the poem he had composed about

the pigs, which he had neglected in a material sense, but had now embalmed in verse. It was long; truth compels the statement that it was awful bosh, and it was in Spanish, else the readers of this true story should have the benefit of a literal translation. But his hearers sat it out, during more than half an hour, and at its close raised him to a pinnacle of happiness by their rapturous applause. Don Alessandro, indeed, was deceived by the testimonial into thinking that it was intended for an encore, and was about inflicting a repetition upon his hearers when his wife rose to the occasion, thrust him into a seat and a choice morsel of pork into his mouth, thus effectually stopping all further foolishness. Don Alessandro found the meat so sweet and to his liking that he fell to with great gusto, and soon forgot all about the poem in his devotion to the pork.

And so everybody at last was made happy and the *san cocho* was pronounced the success of the season. Indeed, Don Alessandro's reputation as a cook was so firmly established that he afterward had more calls to preside at *san cochos* than he could attend to. He always made a point of acceding to requests of this sort whenever possible, especially as his neighbors, knowing his weakness, invariably invited him not only to cook the pigs but to bring with him "that beautiful poem" he had composed. It was always noticed, however, that the pigs seemed to hold first place in their esteem, and some people were un-

generous enough, after they had partaken of the food he had cooked, to leave the table in great haste when the poem was produced. On these occasions — whenever their departure was so abrupt as to attract his attention — Don Alessandro consoled himself with the reflection that it was ever the misfortune of genius to be misunderstood.

In justice to Don Alessandro, it should be said that his weakness for poetry was the only real failing he had; but this was more than enough to counterbalance his many virtues, his wife and daughters thought, since it made him so unpractical and kept them ever on the verge of poverty. Really, these estimable ladies are entitled to our sympathy and admiration, on account of the heroic manner in which they bore up under their inflictions. To be isolated on a lonely rancho without intercourse with the best of their kind was bad enough; but when in addition to that they were compelled to exercise rigid economy for the sake of a mere living, their cheerful spirits under the circumstances were wonderful. If it be true that adversity and isolation bring out whatever good there is in people, then they were living exemplars of this truth. They were little less than angelic, the boys thought, and when the time came for them to say good-by, on the morning after the feast, they felt a tenderness for this family which they could not express. It is not often that one travelling far from his native land finds such

true friends as these had been to our young treasure-seekers. Although, truth to tell, there is more goodness in the world than the world has credit for.

But the morning came at last when their departure could be no longer delayed. The bullocks were brought around, high stepping and skittish from their days of rest and good feeding; on their backs the boys' equipment was piled and firmly strapped; and while they impatiently pawed the earth in front of the veranda, their owners bade the family farewell.

It may seem an easy matter to bid good-by to such as these, who were in a manner casual acquaintances; but at the sight of the teary eyes of those five young ladies and their mother, and the fierce expression on the countenance of Don Alessandro, caused by his attempt to keep his own feelings from finding vent, the boys found it difficult to say farewell with a steady voice. It is to their credit that their eyes, too, were moist and their voices trembling with emotion. They may not have seemed the kind to give way to their feelings, and perhaps they have not been adequately presented by the narrator of their adventures; but the fact is they were kind-hearted and they knew how to prize such friends as these. To learn the worth of friends, go out into the world as they went. Those one meets will be appreciated; those left at home will have their value enhanced.

"Well, you are off for good, are you?" asked

Don Alessandro. "You are two fools, that's all I have to say!" And he turned aside to hide his disappointment.

"Indeed, but you are," chirped Rita, saucy as ever, even though smitten with grief at the thought of their departure. "You will get into all sorts of trouble, I know you will."

"Oh," exclaimed Tomasina, "you have forgotten the swords!" She ran into the house and soon returned with the Toledos, each blade shining and spotless, telling of the labor that must have been expended to put them in order. "There," she said almost gayly, as she gave them to the boys. "One of these is for the tyrant, remember!" And she smiled through her tears, as if firmly convinced that they would render a good account of their charge.

XXV.

What happened in the Night.

AS the boys mounted, each one tucked his sword away between his left leg and the saddle, after the manner in which the Dominicanos carried their machetes, and as each blade was encased in a leather sheath, it did not attract much attention.

After they were mounted they would fain have lingered for a few more last words; but their bovine steeds were fractious and took the bits in their mouths, — that is, they lifted their noses so high in air, that pulling on the rings would not hurt them much, — and cantered away at a two-forty pace. Fortunately the gate was open, or the chances are they would have tried to leap it, and so they went out into the lane as if all the cowboys of Texas were after them.

The boys' exit was not very dignified, what with their camp equipage, such as frying pans and tin cups, banging against their bullocks' ribs, and their arms flying out at right angles with their bodies, but they were much relieved to think the ordeal was over. Above the din they heard the girls' voices

sending after them a last farewell, with injunctions to come back after they had done their work.

Turning in their saddles the boys waved a final adieu, then gave rein to the bullocks and tore down the lane until the rebellious animals were glad enough to ease up a bit. They travelled all that day in a northerly direction, halting only a half hour at noon, and at night when the shadows began to lengthen, found themselves on the borders of a pine-wood country at the right bank of a sparkling stream. They had steadily climbed the hills since noon, and the elevation was now quite great, the air being correspondingly cooler. They tethered their bullocks in a pasture of wild grass, first removing their luggage, made a fire of pine cones and cooked a frugal meal, after which they wrapped themselves in their blankets, each at the foot of a great tree, and went to sleep.

They were now in the enemy's country, or in a region where they knew their movements were likely to be watched; but they put their trust in Providence and each "slept with one eye open."

Toward morning, it might have been two or three o'clock, Hartley was awakened by something cold being pressed against his face. He put out one hand without stirring otherwise, except to slide the other hand downward and grasp his rifle which lay by his side, and felt something which he knew at once was the muzzle of his bullock, from a peculiar twist of

the nose ring, and was at once so reassured that he sat up and looked around. The animal stood close by his side, dimly outlined in the dusk, and when he saw that his master was awake he uttered a low "moo" of recognition. Had he taken another step he might have trodden upon the recumbent form of his owner; but he was too wise a brute for that.

Hartley was startled; not so much at the sight of the bullock, as at the thought of his being free, for he had securely staked him out before he had gone to sleep. He spoke to the animal in a low voice, rubbed his nose awhile, then sliding one hand along the lariat attached to his neck, gathered it all in until he came to the end. It was as he had feared. The lariat had been cut.

That meant, of course, human interlopers, bent either upon stealing the bullocks or stampeding them for the sake of more surely getting their masters into their power. Hartley felt the blood settle about his heart, and he grew cold at the thought, for even at that moment the intruder might be watching him from some near-by place of concealment. He snuggled against the tree as closely as possible, in order to present no conspicuous mark for the enemy to shoot at, and then tried to unravel the mystery. His first impulse, of course, was to awaken Arthur, who was still sleeping peacefully near him; but the necessary movement would, he reflected, expose them both, and he shrank back again. No, he could not

arouse his brother, but must await the coming of the dawn. So he sat there with the lariat in one hand, the other grasping his trusty rifle, and awaited daylight.

How slowly sped the minutes and the hours! His fancy evoked strange dark forms that flitted noiselessly from tree to thicket, stretched out arms to seize and seemed about to grapple with him, as he sat in silence with his back against the tree. The bullock lay down and contentedly chewed its cud, and the boy strained his ears for some sign of its mate, but heard no sound that would indicate its presence. An owl came and hooted in a tree near at hand, and the uncouth sounds it made were very welcome, reminding him that he was not alone in his vigil.

After perhaps two hours there was a glimmer of light in the east; birds in the thickets began to twitter and stir; Nature was awakening; he could feel her pulse-beats, and was reassured. But he redoubled his watchfulness, peering here and there as the darkness was dispelled, resolved if possible to "get the drop" on the mysterious visitor, if he were still about. But when it was fairly daylight and there was an open view all around him, he no longer hesitated to arouse his brother, and with a slight touch awoke him. Arthur was up and on his feet in an instant, alert and ready, with his own rifle firmly grasped, almost before he was really awake.

"What is it, Hart?" he asked sleepily. "What's the matter?"

Hartley pointed to the bullock, now stretching itself preparatory to standing erect, then to the lariat with its severed end. Arthur at once divined the trouble and gave utterance to a long, low whistle.

"How long ago, Art?" he whispered, glancing cautiously about. "When did it happen?"

Hartley told him, and added: "I haven't seen anything of 'José' yet, and am afraid he has been taken away. Whoever it was must have tried to steal both, and either became frightened or was outwitted by 'Joe' here, who came and stood beside me till I awoke."

The boys had given names to their bullocks, Arthur's beast having been called José and Hartley's Joe. Both meant the same in English, José — pronounced Ho-say' — being the Spanish for Joseph, and Joe, of course, an abbreviation of the same.

"I didn't think the enemy would get after us quite so soon, did you?" Arthur whispered fearsomely, for he was greatly disturbed by this event the first night they had spent in the open air alone. It was not an auspicious beginning, as any one would admit, and the brothers were rather cast down, though they had invaded the region with a full understanding of the risks attendant upon their undertaking.

"No, I didn't, that's a fact," replied Hartley. "It's mean, too, I think, not to let us get even a glimpse of the gold before trying to run us out. And I'm

determined to find out who it was, if it takes a month to do it!"

"Yes, we can't stay here with this uncertainty hanging over us. Throw the lariat over your arm, Hart, and let's see if we can find any signs of José. The ground is soft, and we ought to be able to track him, anyway."

Acting upon this suggestion, the boys went to the wild pasture and searched for signs of the missing bullock, Joe following submissively behind. They soon found tracks that led, not as they had expected they would lead, back upon the trail they had followed thus far, but farther yet into the forest. Beside the hoof-prints of their beast they saw the impressions of a naked human foot, large and misshapen, as though belonging to one who had gone unshod all his life. This also surprised them, for they had expected to find the imprint of a soldier's foot, which would either have a shoe on it or show that its owner had not been accustomed to going barefoot.

"Well," said Arthur, after they had tracked the fugitives for more than an hour, "the hunt will probably take us in the direction we wish to go, and I think we had better return, get some breakfast, and then pack all our stuff on Joe's back and prepare to make a day of it."

"I think so, too," said Hartley. "I'm hungry already, and wherever we come up with them we shall have to return to the camp for the luggage; and

besides, we run the risk of losing all we have there while we are away."

Acting upon this sensible conclusion, the boys returned to camp, finding everything as they had left it, and after preparing a pot of coffee and eating a frugal breakfast, they packed all their belongings upon the patient Joe and set out a second time on the trail they had discovered. As Joe's load was a double one, including not only all his own freight but that of his mate, even the extra *aparejo*, there was no thought of riding on the part of the boys, who trudged along ahead leading him by the lariat.

What puzzled them from the very first was that there seemed to be no attempt at concealment, for the trail was open and easy to follow, without any détours over stony ground or up the beds of streams, in order to throw any pursuers off the track. They took it up where they had left off and kept it all day, following at a brisk walk, with a short halt at midday for lunch. It led them directly into the very heart of the broken cordillera that forms the backbone of the island.

As they ascended, the scenery, ever beautiful, became if possible more attractive, the trees grew larger and grander, the air got cooler, and the streams were more numerous. Now they would ascend the bed of some river, which, when in flood, could have swept them to destruction, but was then a purling stream flowing over mossy stones and beneath overhanging

palms. Again their path took them up the steep sides of hills clothed with vegetation, but ever beneath broad-armed trees, such as silk-cottons, rosewood, and mahogany, which were hung with *lianas*, or forest vines, seemingly miles in length.

Still ascending, twisting, turning, but ever upward going, the trail led them on, beckoning like a will-o'-the-wisp. There could be no mistaking it, for it was as plain as the nose on one's face, to these youngsters trained in forest signs. The longer they followed it, however, the more they were puzzled, for they could not understand the motive of any sane person in pursuing such a course. But the longer they followed the trail the more determined they became to see its ending and bring the author of it to book. He should repay them for all this trouble, if it were possible to make him. They did not count upon the contingency of meeting more than one man, unless he should lead them into an ambush or a concealed camp, for there were imprints of but one man's feet. Now and then even these would disappear, as over the level stretches he had probably mounted the bullock and ridden him, although not at a rapid pace.

"The rascal is apparently careful of José," said Arthur, after carefully examining the telltale imprints in the soft earth of one of these level spaces, "and I'm grateful to him for that much."

"Yes, that may be," retorted Hartley; "but I'm

not grateful to him for this painful walk we've had to-day. Methinks I will take it out of his hide when we come up with him."

"First catch your hare before basting him," laughed Arthur. "I don't mind the walk through this magnificent forest, in this cool air, so long as we find old José safe and sound at the end of it."

"Yes, but suppose we don't, what then?" Hartley was getting tired and petulant; his rifle galled his shoulder, and Joe had a way now and then of hanging back and making it hard to go ahead.

Arthur came and tried to take his brother's rifle, but the latter would not let him. "No," he said, "I can carry it well enough; besides, you can't fight with two rifles at the same time. Let me alone, I'm all right."

It was now getting dusk, the fire-beetles were flying about, and the night birds were on the wing. Suddenly, as they turned a curve in the trail, they saw a light gleam out, and as there were no houses in this wild forest, they knew this must have to do with the object of their pursuit.

"Stay here, Hart, while I go ahead to reconnoitre," cautioned Arthur, and his brother did as he was bidden. Arthur crept ahead in a crouching position until he got close to the light, which was the flame of a camp-fire, and saw something startling.

XXVI.

The Mysterious Prisoner.

AS the flames leaped up from a fire of gum logs, they threw against the background of forest, behind a small clearing, the exaggerated proportions of a giant. He was, indeed, a man of massive build, in *propria persona*, but his shadow, as projected against the illuminated screen of trees and vines, gave an impression of some being fresh from Brobdingnag, it was so vast.

The original of it was moving about the fire, piling on fresh fuel and sticking around it a series of stakes, each one with a huge slice of meat hanging from it, so placed that the heat would slowly cook it. He was so busy at his task that he did not hear the approach of the young American; and, in fact, he might have been never so alert, and he would not have detected his coming, probably, for Arthur knew the trained hunter's secret of stealthy trailing. Peering through the thicket that separated him from the open space, Arthur watched the man for several minutes, trying to gather from his appearance whether he were likely to prove friend or enemy.

Whichever he were, at all events he was the man

who had stolen the bullock, for there was old José tied to a tree close by, calmly chewing his cud and apparently at peace with all the world. He did not seem to have suffered any from his long day's journey, and in proof that his captor had a kindly feeling toward him was the man's treatment of him, for he never passed by without giving him a pat on the nose or bestowing an endearing epithet, and had already heaped up some grass for him to eat, even before his own supper was prepared.

All these little points Arthur took into consideration in the momentous question he was pondering while crouched there behind the thicket. He had already settled in his mind that the man had no companion or accomplice, not only from his being then alone, but from his attitude, whether walking or standing still, which was that of one who had long led a solitary life.

After satisfying himself that there was no immediate prospect of the man's leaving the camp for the night, — or at least, until after he had cooked and eaten the supper he was preparing, — Arthur quietly withdrew from his post of observation and retreated down the trail. Not a leaf or a twig stirred as he stealthily crept along; but if there had been a procession of people with him the noises they might have made would have been drowned in the nocturnal concert that was now going on. There were frogs and beetles, "crak-craks" and lizards, night

birds and night insects, all engaged in swelling the volume of sound. It swept through the forest in rhythmic cadence, rising and falling as if controlled by some mighty master of ceremonies, and at intervals ceasing altogether for a moment. Now and then, above the concert, the young man thought he detected the wail of the puma or mountain lion, but if so the animal was far off in the heights above.

He found Hartley in the very place where he had left him, the bullock grazing near, and soon communicated what he had observed. He then told him what he thought of the situation, and his brother agreed that they had better push forward together, one in advance with his rifle in the crook of his arm, and the other just behind and ready to support the attack, when it should open, the patient Joe bringing up the rear. Each insisted upon having the post of honor, and of possible danger; but finally Hartley's argument, that as Arthur had already made the reconnoissance he should be willing to give way in the second advance, prevailed, and he was allowed to lead. Arthur kept far enough behind to prevent Joe from betraying their coming by the noise he made brushing against the bushes, and Hartley was soon abreast the camp-fire.

The man was there still, wholly absorbed in tending his improvised spits, upon which the slabs of meat were now sputtering and sizzling above the glowing coals. He was muttering to himself and

chuckling, evidently anticipating the great feast he was going to have as soon as his meat was cooked, and apparently wholly unsuspicious of danger lurking near.

"It's too bad to interrupt him now, I declare," said Hartley to himself. "He's laid out to have a jolly good feed, and I'm hungry enough to appreciate those steaks myself, if they were mine. I'll go back and ask Art about it." And back he went.

"Now, Art, the old fellow has just got his supper nearly ready, and he looks hungry. Don't you think we'd better postpone proceedings until after he's had his food? Then again, he might be more reasonable, you know, after he's filled himself up."

"Not a bit of it," answered Arthur, hastily, and rather angrily. "He may be hungry, as you say, but so are we; and what's more, he has been the cause of the hardest day's tramp and the shortest time for eating that we've had since we started. I'm hungry enough at this blessed minute to eat everything we've got in the saddle-bags. I want the thing over with so that we can get a bite ourselves; and if you don't bring that old rascal to book within fifteen minutes, I'll go ahead and do him up at once."

"Oh, well, if that's the way you feel, of course there's only one thing to do. But I guess you're right, after all."

Into the darkness trudged Hartley the second time, but Arthur kept close behind him, not willing

to risk another hitch in the affair; so close, indeed, that when Joe stepped upon a dead limb in the path and it broke with a sharp crack, their quarry was on the alert in an instant. Hartley had but just reached the thicket that screened him from the fire, and was going to step out into the open and command the man to surrender, when the unfortunate "crack" resounded through the forest. He saw the man spring to an erect position and gaze out into the darkness, then give a mighty leap over the fire and through the smoke, beyond which he disappeared.

Hartley's rifle was at shoulder and a sharp report rang out ere the smoke obscured the flying figure. Ordinarily the bullet would have gone straight to its intended mark, but this time it missed, and instead went somewhere into space in the direction of the stars. The reason was that Arthur had come up at the instant his brother had pulled trigger and struck the rifle barrel with his hand.

Hartley turned upon him with blazing eyes. "What did you do that for? Do you want that man to kill us both?"

"No, Hart, and he won't, either."

"But he's escaped, and we don't know when he may come back, perhaps with a whole posse of companions, and cut our throats while we sleep. We know he's a thief, and why not a murderer?"

"Because he isn't that kind, Hart; I studied him while he was working about the fire, and he's honest

and straight. But there's no time to lose. Walk out there to the right of the fire, where you can see beyond the smoke, and stand in the shadow, while I swing around to the left and come up on the enemy's flank. I don't believe he's gone far, and I think we can smoke him out."

Hartley obeyed his brother from force of habit, having been long ago convinced that in the end he was generally right; but he couldn't help grumbling to himself about the risk they ran.

Arthur crawled through the bushes fringing the small clearing, and after he had gained what he thought was a sufficient distance from the camp-fire circled around until abreast it and then worked back again. The forest was dark, but there was light enough for the boy to keep his bearings, and as he had a definite idea of the exact spot in which the fugitive had sought to conceal himself, he went right to it. Coming at last upon a huge fallen tree, with a trunk as big as the one Robinson Crusoe hewed out for his first canoe, Arthur clambered upon it and pointing the muzzle of his rifle at the ground on the other side, cried out in Spanish, "Come out of that, or I will shoot!"

There was a rustling of leaves and branches, and forth from his retreat beneath the bole of the fallen tree, where he had tried to burrow like an armadillo, came the fugitive, without a single word. He stood up in the darkness, so near that Arthur could have

touched him with the rifle. "Turn about and go back to the fire," commanded the young man, and he was obeyed without hesitation.

"Don't try to escape," warned Arthur, as he climbed down from the tree trunk, "for you can't get away without carrying a bullet with you, and that would be bad for your health. And don't think you can do anything with that machete, for there are two of us with rifles."

The man had a long keen machete in one hand which he clutched rather menacingly, as he half turned to see what sort of a person it was who had so boldly pursued him, so dexterously ferreted out his hiding-place, and who now so imperiously ordered him about. But if he had any thought of resisting, his discretion got the better of his valor and he went toward the camp-fire as directed.

Arrived at the cleared space, Arthur found that Joe and José had come together and were seemingly happy over the reunion, for they were contentedly munching grass from the same heap, while Hartley stood by watching them eat. The man halted as he came within the firelight, and when he saw the boy standing by the bullocks raised his hand to his head and gave a respectful salute. His salutation was more, in fact, than a mere gesture, for it implied extreme deference. Then he turned to look at his conqueror, Arthur, and casting aside his machete he threw himself at his feet. There was something very

mysterious in his actions, but all was explained later on, when the three became better acquainted.

"Oh, say, don't do that," cried Arthur. "You don't owe me anything. Go ahead and get your supper. The meat is burning, don't you see?"

The man gathered himself together, went to the fire, and was at once busy with the preparation of the evening meal, seemingly as unconcerned as though nothing had happened to interrupt his work.

While the young men sat on a log watching his actions with great interest, their rifles leaning against a near tree, he scraped the coals together, placed upon them some tortillas — or Indian corn cakes — which he drew forth from a native basket hanging on a limb, then gathered some palm leaves, and spread them on the ground. The palm leaves were to serve as table and plates combined, for upon them the man first piled the meat, then the tortillas, and having done this invited his guests to partake of the repast he had prepared.

"Señores," he said, "this is all I have to offer, but you are welcome. Though I expected you, yet I could not find that which I would have liked to spread before you. Eat, señores, and fill the heart of your servant with joy."

The man was evidently sincere, but the whole affair seemed so unreal that both Arthur and Hartley hesitated to accept the invitation. They also felt that they had no right to the man's supper, which he

had so carefully cooked for himself, and so Arthur said to him: —

"No, no, we cannot do this. That is your supper, this is your fire, the camp is yours. You yourself eat what you have provided, and we will find something in our saddle-bags."

The man was quite evidently cast down by their refusal, and he positively refused to partake until after they had satisfied their hunger; so they made the best of the situation and fell to upon the meat and tortillas. Having fasted for many hours, the food tasted very good, and it was with a feeling of thankfulness that they turned to their host and insisted that he should join them. This, however, he would not do, declaring that he was there for the express purpose of waiting upon his masters — as he insisted upon calling them — whose every wish it was his pleasure to gratify.

"Seems like heaping coals of fire on our heads, doesn't it, Art?"

"It has somewhat that appearance," replied Arthur to his brother's question. "But he has yet the bullock to account for. I wonder how he will explain the theft of our José?"

XXVII.

An Angel Unawares.

IT must be admitted that there was a feeling of constraint pervading this little party in the mountain wilds of Santo Domingo, for on the one hand there was the man who was for the time being deprived of his liberty, and on the other the two young men whom he had deprived temporarily of their bullock. It was apparent to all concerned that explanations ought to be in order before much further time elapsed, and it was perhaps in consequence of this feeling, that after all had eaten supper they gathered near the fire and began a desultory conversation.

Arthur started it by saying to the man: "What did you mean by saying that you expected us? Did you ever see either of us before?"

"No, señor; not in the flesh, but in a dream."

"Ah, that was it! And so you dreamt that we were coming to visit you? As you stole our bullock, you must have known that we would be sure to follow after it."

"But, señor, I did not know it was your bullock. I found it grazing in the wild pasture and took it, that was all."

"Yes, but it was fastened to a stake. You must have known that it belonged to somebody. And there was the other one too, the lariat attached to which you cut, but let him loose."

"All you say is true, my master; but there is something you do not understand, and that is I did not know of your presence near the bullock last night. I had a dream, as I said. In the dream I was informed that down in the pasture near the pine woods I could find a bullock which would be mine for the going after it. Now, señores, I have lived in these mountains many years all alone, without any companion whatever, and I yearned for one; so when I was told in a dream that a bullock awaited me to be had for the getting, I lost no time but went after it. I found it in the place where the dream told me it would be, and that was enough. I did not question my right to take it; but finding there two bullocks instead of one, and having been told nothing of the other, I cut loose the second one and came away, even as you know."

The man had no other explanation to offer and the boys were obliged to accept this, for when questioned more closely he merely went over the same ground again, running around in a circle, beginning and ending with the story of the dream.

"But you have not explained why you expected us," said Hartley.

"Oh, that was in the dream, too; that two white

men, strangers to this island, should come up into the mountains and be my guests. And I was commanded to prepare a feast for them every night, of the best I had; hence, as you saw, I broiled meat sufficient for more than one — myself. I cannot tell you, señores, how the dream came to me, nor why; but it came, and all has fallen out as was predicted, so I am not surprised that you should be here, nor that I am to serve you."

"He seems honest," said Arthur, in an aside to his brother, speaking in English, "and I think we can trust him; though his story does sound rather improbable."

"Very improbable," assented Arthur; "but I am sure we can trust him. But who is he, I wonder? He looks like an Indian, and also something like the Moors we saw in Algiers."

"There is only one way of finding out," answered Hartley.

"Of course," rejoined Arthur, who then asked the man his nationality.

"I have none," he replied gloomily. "I am a wanderer, and far from the land that gave me birth."

"But have you not been in other parts of the island? Were you ever in the capital?" asked Arthur.

"Yes, my master, I have been in the capital."

"And have you ever seen the President?"

"Yes, masters, I have seen the President." The

man's face hardened and a gleam of hatred flashed from his eyes. "When you, my masters, made your appearance so suddenly awhile ago, I thought it was somebody sent by the President and knew that my only safety lay in flight. That is why I ran and hid myself. But, thank God, my masters, you found me. You will not take me back to Lelee? No, I see in your eyes that you will not betray me."

"Not we," Arthur assured him, with a bitter laugh.

"No, indeed," added Hartley. "We have our own grievances against Lelee. Instead of assisting him to find you, we would do all in our power to help you escape him. In fact, we ourselves are trying to hide from him now."

"Oh, my masters, then the good God in heaven must have sent you to me. I see now why I had the dream, why I took your bullock, why you followed me and found me, for I know the place where you can hide, that not even Lelee can find you, even though this island he calls his own. It is my own place, masters, and is only a day's journey from here. To-morrow night, and we can be there. Will you go with me?"

The boys hesitated before answering, each having in mind the real object of this journey, which was not so much to hide from the President, as to secure the gold they were after without being detected by his emissaries and carried back to prison at the

capital. But they could probably go with the man and stay awhile in his retreat, even if the trip there caused a little delay; so they finally assented to his proposition, greatly to his joy.

"Ah, my masters, you will do me honor to go with me. For more than two years I have lived there alone, in that little valley in the mountains. But it is a most beautiful valley, my masters, fit for an earthly paradise, and it is well that you should go and dwell therein, for it was wasted on a solitary man like me. Ah, now I am happy to think that at last I shall have white men as guests, and can serve them and show them the beauties of my valley."

And this is how the mystery was solved — which was not so much of a mystery, after all — and how our friends came to dwell in a valley so beautiful that they afterward felt nothing but pain at the thought of leaving it, when by long acquaintance they had grown to be in love with its charms. That night they slept on the ground under the trees, each member of the little party feeling trustful and secure. At daylight next morning the man was up and getting fodder for the bullocks. An hour later he had breakfast ready for all, and before the sun had risen above the tree-tops the party had set out on the journey still farther into the mountains.

All day they travelled, with a brief halt at noon by the side of a sparkling spring that welled out from beneath the roots of an immense forest tree.

They steadily climbed, higher and higher, until they left behind them all trace of tropical vegetation, and had penetrated the belt or zone that answers to the temperate region, where altitude performed the services of latitude, — that is, the greater height above the sea and cooler atmosphere made a corresponding change in the botanical productions. They had now, in the course of their desultory journey from the coast, traversed two zones of climate and vegetation. First, at the level of the sea, they had passed through the hot zone, what the Spaniards called the *tierra caliente*, where cocoa palms flourished and bananas and plantains grew wherever the soil was moist, and on the plains the various forms of cactus were numerous. Now they had left behind them the heated coast climate, and were in the cool atmosphere of a region where the temperature was more like that of the northern United States in summer.

Oh, it was glorious, up there in the "high woods," as the natives call the upper forests above the zone of heat, for vast and broad-armed forest giants spread their limbs above them so far aloft that their tops were hidden from view. Their trunks were fluted and buttressed, like the walls of old cathedrals, and from their branches hung thousands of lianas, or ropelike vines, which held the great trees to the ground, as the rigging of a ship holds the masts to the bulwarks. And these lianas, again, were hung with thousands of epiphytes and parasitic plants, the

one class feeding on the air, the other sucking out the juices of the vines and trees upon which they were affixed.

Some of these were true orchids, with at least one species worth more than its weight in gold, and which, were its haunts known to collectors, would be hunted for eagerly and held to be cheap at any price or risk to life and limb, for the purpose of adorning the conservatories of wealthy collectors. They sent out spikes and sprays of gorgeous blossoms, some of the individual flowers shaped like butterflies, others like humming-birds around which darted and hovered the very birds of which they were such cunning counterfeits. Then there were great wild pines, with lush leaves of vivid green, in the hollows of which was secreted pure water. They only had to be tapped, by thrusting through the bases of the leaves a knife or cutlass, to pour forth their limpid treasure for the refreshing of the thirsty traveller.

Around the trunks of some of the slenderer trees were wrapped the "wild figs," which enclosed them in a meshwork of wood or bark through which the living support could be seen at intervals, and in many cases were slowly strangling out their lives.

One of the trees which the boys saw thus enclosed in the ligneous clutch of the parasitic fig was a beautiful palm, its trunk showing through the interstices of the strangler and its coronet of leafy plumes towering above it. A short time only would elapse

before the palm would have to succumb to the suffocating pressure of the enclosing parasite, its sap drawn out by the octopus-like tentacles, and be obliged to yield its very life to the wild fig's demands.

Not many birds enlivened the twilight gloom beneath the great trees, for birds prefer open spaces where they can disport in the sunshine; but myriads of humming-birds darted hither and thither, like coals or gleaming jewels, and in the tree-tops, far up out of sight, flocks of parrots chattered noisily.

The path became more and more obscure, and along in the middle of the afternoon, when the travellers had reached a knife-like ridge of the mountain, where the trees were more sparsely distributed, the trail seemed altogether lost. Then the guide, who had walked ahead with his cutlass in the hollow of his right arm, now and then using it to clear away the overhanging bushes and vines which obstructed progress, fell back, and leading one of the bullocks by the line attached to its nose, drew it aside, beckoning the boys to follow with the other animal and to tread cautiously, breaking as few plants as possible.

"We must conceal our trail, so that no enemy may follow us," he explained. "This is the summit of the cordilleras, where few other men have ever passed. We are nearing the entrance to my retreat. Do not be afraid, but follow after carefully."

They climbed the ridge where it was as steep as the roof of an ordinary house and finally stood, panting and almost breathless, upon the ridgepole, which the guide aptly termed the capstone of the pyramid. From the point where they stood the mountains swept away in every direction, miles upon miles of billowy slopes and emerald peaks, until the sea on either side bounded their vision.

"Grand, beautiful, glorious!" were the exclamations that burst from the delighted travellers, gazing upon this magnificent view, entranced, unmindful of the perils that beset them.

XXVIII.

The Vale of Paradise.

THE ridge upon which they stood was so sharply cut that a misstep would have plunged the travellers far below into abysmal depths, and the poor bullocks, unaware of their masters' precautions against accidents, moaned apprehensively, bunching their feet together and arching their backs, like a cat in a passion. But they followed obediently after the guide, who led the way for a hundred yards along the crest of the ridge, then turned sharply to the right, as they came abreast a huge rock from which the floods of many a hurricane season had washed the supporting soil almost entirely away, leaving it so delicately poised that it seemed a slight push would have sent it crashing into the valley outspread beneath.

Stumbling through the loose gravel at an incline so steep that some of the bullocks' cargo fell over their heads and went tumbling over the edge of the precipice along the verge of which they were crawling, after a few minutes, which seemed to the boys almost an eternity of suspense, they reached a shelter of scant shrubbery on the northern side of the

ridge. The vegetation here was hardly more than lycopodiums and sub-Alpine plants that grow in the tropics only at high altitudes, but it afforded a foothold for the frightened animals, and a bed upon which the boys cast themselves, exhausted, as soon as their guide had motioned them to halt.

"That was a hard scramble, eh, my masters? But the worst is over. Right below us lies the portal to my paradise. You cannot see it, for it is hidden in the sea of verdure that covers all below like an emerald plain. But it is there, and if you will wait here while I go back to conceal all traces of our passing, so that none may follow here, I will soon return and lead you to it."

So saying, the guide went back to the ridge, where he carefully covered the tracks made by the men and bullocks, rearranged the disturbed vegetation so that no one would have suspected any had ever passed that way, then returned, as he had promised.

"See, my masters, is not that a glorious view? Almost half the island seems to be outspread before us here. It looks to you a wilderness of forest and high peaks, does it not? Do you note those bare rocks outcropping here and there, arranged in a circle like the brim of a huge bowl? Yes? Those are the peaks that guard the happy valley, an immense basin several miles across, filled with trees so densely that no one but myself and some friends have ever suspected its existence, — at least, not recently I am

sure. Now come, as you are rested; we will seek the entrance to the valley. It is within short gunshot, and yet you could not find it if I were to leave you here this moment."

The guide took Joe by the nose, José keeping close behind the two, and the boys bringing up the rear. Sliding over the slippery lycopodiums, like boys coasting over the frozen surface of a snow-field, men and beasts went downward at a rapid gait, the latter half of the time on their haunches and uttering many a grunt of expostulation, when suddenly their supports gave way under them, and they plunged through matted vines, from daylight into darkness.

The transition was so sudden, from the glare of the sun outside to the gloom of the place into which they had fallen, that for a while they lay bewildered, both boys and beasts. The elastic vines had sprung back again to their customary places, and hardly a ray of light penetrated through them, so that it was a long time before the boys discovered that they had fallen into a cavern, the roof of which was hung with stalactites which gleamed all around and above them, excepting for the rift in the rock through which they had descended.

Fortunately, but probably with intention, the guide had kept the bullocks well ahead of them; otherwise there might have been an accident to chronicle. It was also fortunate that they had descended upon a bed of soft sand, and that the trailing vines had been

strong enough and elastic enough to support them until they were almost down, so that neither human being nor dumb animal had been injured. The guide was engaged for a few minutes in helping the bullocks to their feet and rearranging their loads, which had been severely shaken up by the fall, then he left them safe and sound and came to see the boys.

"Well, what do you think of my trap-door, my masters? Is it not safely concealed, think you, so that no one can find it?"

"What!" exclaimed Hartley, "do you mean to say that fall was prearranged? We thought it must have been an accident."

The queer man laughed as he replied: "Not so, my master. That is the only entrance to my valley. That is the portal of which I spoke. But I knew it well enough to feel assured that you would not be hurt, or I should not have led you hither."

"But the bullocks, they can never be gotten out again."

"No, señor, that is true, I fear. Once in, forever to stay, so far as they are concerned. But that is nothing; you will not want to get them out. We will keep them to plough with, to haul the timber for the houses we shall build, to carry the fruits of the earth."

Arthur had said nothing, being engaged in studying the features of the guide as he replied to his brother's questions. The sudden turn of affairs had

raised a momentary doubt in his mind as to the integrity of the man's intentions regarding them. Perhaps, after all, he had been mistaken, and the guide had some sinister motive in thus bringing them into a place from which there was apparently no escape. He did not like to entertain such doubts, not only because they reflected upon his judgment, but because by insisting upon having his own way, and sparing the man's life, his brother's life and his own might be imperilled. Still, he could not bring himself to doubt, notwithstanding the suspicious aspect of things, and he concluded to hold his judgment in suspense, but at the same time to be constantly on guard. There was not light enough, at first, to detect anything sinister in the guide's countenance, even if his feelings had shown through his impassive features. As the inmates of the cavern became accustomed to the gloom, they saw that the room in which they were was of vast dimensions, apparently, the roof being low but broad, while the cavern extended far beneath the mountain. How far they knew not, and when they asked the guide, he shrugged his shoulders and said he did not know, himself.

"But, my masters," he added, "it is not now so far to the mouth of the cave, and if you are sufficiently refreshed we will hasten into outer air."

They signified their desire to proceed, and so he drove the bullocks forward, despite their unwillingness to move in the dim light, and it was not long before

they were gladdened by a ray of sunshine penetrating the gloom. Hastening forward, they soon found the mouth of the cave, and saw that it opened out toward the west, so that the sun in its descent into the waves sent its rays quite into it. The cave's mouth opened into a ravine, in the bed of which far down beneath them ran a noisy stream. They clambered down with some difficulty, then crossed the ravine and scaled its northern bank, coming out at last beneath a giant silk-cotton tree which threw its branches out over the rocks.

Looking up, they could see sheer walls of rock on every side, which rose far above them toward the clouds, while from the precipices all around came the low crooning of turtle doves, making such a volume of sound that the boys concluded there must be millions of them living there. A great eagle circled in the sky overhead, his wings gilded by the last gleams of the setting sun, while flocks of parrots were winging their way homeward from feeding grounds to roosting places, talking to each other sleepily as they flew. The forest all about was indeed animate with innocent creatures that had never heard the sound of a gun, that had never suffered at the hand of man, and were living in a state that must have prevailed in the garden of Eden, when our first ancestors were in accord with all created beings.

Surely the vale was the abode of peace, if not of

happiness, and the young men walked on in the gathering gloom pervaded by a blessed sense of security, instead of the haunting fear which had held possession of them for so many months.

"There is something in the very air that breathes of peace," said Hartley to his brother. "Listen to the cooing of the doves and the far-off song of the mocking-bird. Isn't it sweet?"

"Yes, almost too sweet to last," replied Arthur. "It is so restful, too, after the constant turmoil of our experience on the island. It seems to me, I could live here forever and not wish to go away."

"My sentiments, too; but forever is a long time. Say we make it a month, and see how things 'pan out' by that time. Perhaps our friend may not be so subservient at the end of a short stay as he is now. He couldn't do better by us now than if we had been his long-lost brothers, could he?"

"Not a bit," answered Arthur. "But still, he may have something in reserve, you know. I don't believe he has, though, for I'm inclined to judge him by my first impression."

"Oh, your first impression may have been all right. It saved me from committing murder, anyway, when it moved you to knock my rifle barrel up, and I'm grateful for that, let me tell you."

The guide came nearer to them when the conversation had reached this stage, and they could not say anything more about the things in which he was

concerned; so they took to asking him questions. How did he find the valley? How long had he lived here? Did he expect to live here all his days? And were there no other human beings in the valley but themselves?

In answer to the first question he said that he had found the valley by accident, when pursued by some of Lelee's soldiers, who had chased him to the mountain ridge, but whom he had evaded by slipping over and rolling down the matted bed of vines, ending by falling through into the cavern, as they themselves had that very day.

But suppose the soldiers had followed closely after, and had also rolled down the steep? Was there not danger that such a contingency might happen? Yes, the man admitted there was; but he had provided against it. Had they not seen him go back, after all were out of the cavern, and did they not recall that he remained there quite a while? Yes, they recalled that, but what of it?

"Why," rejoined the guide, with a strange gleam in his eyes, "I went back to set a trap for any of our foes who might happen to find the trail and come over the ridge. There is only one path by which they can descend, and that leads right into the cave. If they should fall there now, they would not find a soft bed of sand to receive them, but a row of pointed stakes, which would pierce them through and through; and if they escape the stakes in the cave's mouth, why, I

have set a dead-fall made out of a great log, which will drop and pin them to the ground, should they try to emerge."

The boys shuddered at this cold-blooded preparation for the possible coming of the foe, but they praised the man for his ingenuity, though they might not approve of the whole proceeding.

Night had now fallen about them, but the fire beetles were so numerous that they hardly missed the light of day. They emerged from the dense forest and crossed a lovely glade, where whispering palms embossed a sea of verdure, and on the farther boundary, where silk cottons, mangos, and star apples formed a screen from heat and hurricane, the guide halted before a thatched hut of large dimensions. It was a wattled hut of palm leaves, roof and sides new and clean, sweet smelling, fragrant with the breath of the forest still enmeshed within the thatch. It had apparently never been occupied, but was ready for occupancy, with beds of palm leaves spread on the floor of pounded earth, and two grass hammocks hung from the rafters.

The boys looked at the guide in wonderment, but he merely said, "This house is yours, señores."

XXIX.

Contentment without Wealth.

A STREAM flowed before the hut, a stream running over white and glistening pebbles, overhung with bamboos in feathery clusters and wild plantains that met across and interlaced their leaves. The water was clear as crystal, flowing from a spring in the forest. A little way beyond the hut it ran into another larger stream, and together they plunged over a precipice and were lost in a deep ravine far below.

All around the hut grew various fruit trees, such as mangos, custard apples, sapadillas, alligator pears, limes, oranges, lemons, — in fact almost all the fruits that flourish in the tropics. These, with the pine-apples, maniocs, maize, arrow root, sugar cane, groves of coffee and allspice, nutmegs and acacia, the yams, sweet potatoes, tanias, and other tubers, gave to the owner of this property all he needed for his support in the way of food and condiments.

When he wanted a new dish of any sort, a bowl or spoon, he merely went out and twisted a calabash off one of the trees growing by the river bank, cut it in the needed shape, and left it to dry until his meal was ready. And so it was with the hut itself. The material for roof and rafters, thatch and wattles, he

had found in the palms that grew by thousands all about. No nails were necessary to put the hut together, only tough withes and the skill that came from experience. So there he was, — the master of this happy valley, supplied by nature with everything essential, with luxuries as well, without being obliged to expend a dollar for the purchase of a single article from year's end to year's end. Indeed, as he told the boys, he had not seen a dollar, not even the smallest piece of silver, since he was so fortunate as to discover this retreat.

All this was not discovered by the boys that first night of their arrival, but during ensuing days and weeks of exploration, when they wandered about, sometimes with and at others without their friend, within the confines of this vale of paradise.

There was but one thing that troubled them, and this ceased to give them uneasiness after they found out what a fair and desirable land it was. There was no outlet by which they could escape to the world beyond. On the south was the inaccessible mountain ridge; on the east, west, and north, precipitous walls, over which many rivers plunged and were lost to view in the abysses below, but affording no means of exit for the prisoners. Of course there was the narrow trail by which they had descended to the valley; but that was blocked, they were told, in such a way that they could not attempt it without danger to their lives.

The man made it evident to them that he intended to be their devoted servant, from the very first night when they arrived at the hut in the valley. He told them that he had made the house for them, expecting and praying they would come to occupy it; and now that they had arrived, he and all he had were at their disposal. This offer was sincere, as he proved by his acts, for they were installed in the hut as its sole owners and possessors, their guide occupying one adjacent which was older and much smaller. He bade them rest while he prepared supper for them, then unsaddled the bullocks, removed their loads, and turned them loose to graze in the luxuriant herbage, after which he proceeded to the little cook-house and got together a nice repast in short order, which he set before his guests with many apologies for the lack of luxuries.

The boys were too tired to offer any opposition to his plans, and concluding that — at least for that night — it would be best to take what the gods provided without question, they accepted his ministrations gratefully.

It was a fair view spread before them when the boys went outside the hut the morning after their arrival and looked about. A winding path led from the hut's door to the brook, where in a pool beneath overhanging bamboos they had their morning bath. The air was cool and sweet, fragrant with the perfume of orange blossoms, and in the sun sparkled the jew-

elled crests and throats of many humming-birds, which danced like sprites above the pool and flashed their iridescent plumage before their visitors' eyes. The level fields beyond the stream were filled with sugar-cane, wild and cultivated, the tasselled tops of which were like the plumes of Indian chiefs, the leaves glistening like scimeters in the sunshine. Beyond again lay the broad forest belt, with miles of greenery surging up at last against the red cliffs of the mountains that towered so high above the trees.

"Peace," sang the wind, in a gentle lullaby; "peace" murmured the stream, and "peace" warbled the birds in the thickets. Peace and rest, shelter from danger and protection against the wiles of wicked men, — all this appealed strongly to these young men, and instead of feeling like accepting their guide as a servant they were more disposed to set him on a pedestal and worship him.

"That would be the real old African fashion, wouldn't it, Arthur?" said Hartley, in reply to a suggestion of the sort from his brother. "I suppose some of his ancestors may have worshipped fetiches on the Gold Coast, before the slavers kidnapped and took them to America. Now confess, isn't he a darling?"

"He has been good to us, that's a fact," answered Arthur. "I can't explain all his doings, such for instance as bringing our bullocks here when he knew

they could never be got out again, and blocking the entrance portal so we could not escape."

"But I don't want to escape, do you?" asked Hartley, splashing the cool water and basking in the sun beneath the bamboos.

"No, not yet. But the time may come when we may, you know, then —"

"Oh, bother your doubts, old melancholy. I'm happy, through and through, and so are you, if you will only look into yourself and see."

"Well, perhaps I am. But then, there's the gold. There are our friends outside — the Consul and Don Alessandro. We shall miss them."

"Yes, the Consul was a true friend, and so in his way was the Don. Perhaps a way may open by which we can repay them; but as for the gold — poof! What need have we of that? We are like Robinson Crusoe, who, with all his money, found no use for it during half his lifetime. In fact, I guess we are situated about as he was, anyway, only we have no access to the shore and so no need for a canoe, and no necessity, either, for spending months and years in hewing one out of some great tree, as he did. We have a Man Friday, too, only he's not black, — or brown, rather; for Crusoe's Friday was an Indian, I believe, wasn't he?"

"Yes, a Carib, a native of one of these very islands, but farther to the south, down near the South American coast. There were Indians here, at one time,

but the Spaniards killed them all, many years ago, unless, by chance, some escaped and hid in the mountains."

"And why not? Let's ask our Friday if he ever came across any signs of them. Here he comes now, and I know by the looks of him that coffee is ready, and he expects us to go in and drink."

"Good morning, my masters," said their voluntary servant, in Spanish, coming down to the stream and beaming upon them with his face full of happiness. "*Bueños dias, maestros mios, el café esta lista* — coffee awaits you, gentlemen."

He had two big towels in his hands, coarse but soft, which were evidently the product of a hand loom and might have been woven by himself, only they had seen no sign of the loom. These he wrapped around them and they ran laughing into the hut, where they quickly dressed and soon sat down to the morning coffee.

"It's no use," said Arthur, despairingly, after trying in vain to induce their friend to sit down with them. "He will just spoil us with his attentions. I don't believe he will let us do a thing."

"Well, if he likes it, why not?" replied Hartley, philosophically. "But, do you know, we haven't found out his name. I'm going to ask him what it is."

"My name?" replied the man, in response to Hartley's question. "To be sure. What a fool I

was not to tell you. Why, it is Esteban, *a su disposicion de ustedes, caballeros* — Stephen, at your service, gentlemen."

"And mine is Hartley Strong, and this is my brother Arthur. Now we shall consider ourselves introduced. And there's another question I wish to ask you. It is this: Have you ever found any signs of Indians in this region? Red men, you know, descendants of the aborigines. There were a great many here at one time, the historians say, but tradition states they were all killed, long ago. Now, what do you think, Señor Esteban?"

"I think? What, about Indians?" replied the man, falteringly. "Tell me, have you seen any you thought were such? Any in this valley?"

"Well, no," said Hartley, with a laugh, "as we came here only last night. But I think that there ought to be some here, though, don't you?"

"There might be," rejoined Esteban, evasively, with a troubled countenance. "But if you found any, what would you do to them, señores?"

"Do to them? Nothing, of course. But I should feel like taking them and putting them in a glass case, they are so rare, you know. Why, even their bones would bring a good price. I know of a museum that would give a hundred dollars for an Indian's skeleton — that is, one from this island. Don't you think we could get that from our government museum, Art?"

"Why, yes, I've no doubt of it, for one has never yet been found."

"For their skeletons? Señores, do you take me for a cannibal?" Esteban spread out his hands, with horror in his face. Then, regarding his guests for a moment inquiringly, he darted from the hut and sought the shelter of his cook-house. There he communed with himself something after this fashion: "I wonder if I may trust them with the secret? But no, I dare not. The Queen's life is in my hands. I would rather die than betray her. But again, she may wish to see them. There is so little for her diversion in this lonely place. I will go ask her, perhaps she may order them to appear before her; then no blame can belong to me."

After the boys had finished coffee, they went out to see how their bullocks were getting on, and found them up to their knees in grass and with scant time to receive company. The rings had been taken out of their noses at last, and the boys were obliged to confess that this friend of theirs was more humane than they had been, or any other man they had ever met. He rose at once in their esteem, if that were possible, and when he again appeared they hastened to tell him what they thought.

"Why, that was but natural," he replied gravely to their praise of his action in freeing the poor beasts of their tormenting nose-rings. "It may have been necessary in the world outside, where all living

things seem possessed with devils; but not here. All is love in this happy valley; no harm shall come to anything within it. But, señores, you must excuse me for going away this morning. I have business in the far end of the valley. All you see here is yours; cannot you entertain yourselves while I am away?"

"Certainly, Señor Esteban, do not give us a thought. But when will you return?" asked Arthur.

"Do not call me 'señor,'" said the man. "I am Esteban, your servant. I shall return before night. You will find food and drink in your house. Enjoy as much as you can whatever you find, and remember, all is yours. Till to-night, then, *adios*."

"Good-by, Esteban, we shall look for you in the afternoon."

"I wonder what's the mystery?" said Hartley, as they stood watching the man striding across the plain. "I would give something to find out, wouldn't you?"

XXX.

Caonabo and Ancient Cipango.

"WE shall find out in good time, I'm sure," Arthur replied to his brother's question. "Either I'm very much mistaken, or we are on the verge of a great discovery. That man is a mystery all through. He is something better than what he appears,—we can tell that from his speech, which shows some education on his part."

"Yes, indeed," assented Hartley, eagerly, "he has had excellent training somewhere, and his Spanish is perfect. But you have noticed it is of a very ancient form, almost archaic, as though he had been brought up in a monastery perhaps, where the language of Ferdinand and Isabella's time was used. And his age? What do you think it is? Sometimes he seems not more than fifty, but at other times more than a hundred."

"A hundred?" said Arthur. "Yes, indeed, two or three hundred. Why, I should have no difficulty in imagining him all of that. It is strange, but there is a tradition that a Spaniard named Esteban was taken captive by Caonabo, the fierce Carib chieftain."

"Yes, and do you not recall that this same Caonabo

came from the Cibao, or stony country, which Columbus thought was the veritable Cipango, of which he had read in the story by Marco Polo, and was in search of all his life? It was only this morning that Esteban let fall that word, Cibao, in speaking of this region as the centre of gold deposits in the island. What if this might be the very district we are in search of, after all?"

"True, Hart, I hadn't thought of it; but you may be right. We've got the transcription of the Consul's clew with us; let's go into the hut and look it over."

Both boys were excited and eager, now, for the discovery of that gold which a few hours before they had affected to hold in such contempt. Such is human nature, after all. The very name of gold has a charm about it, is alluring, fascinating, despise its acquisition as we may. All history tells us of what man has suffered to obtain the precious metal.

"Here it is," cried Arthur, drawing the piece of paper from the corner of an old pocket-book, where it had lain ever since they had left the capital. "Poor old Columbus! Did he ever imagine that his precious clew would fall into the hands of such insignificant bits of humanity as we are? But no matter; I will read it: 'It is to make known the whereabouts of the treasure of the Cacique of the Golden House, otherwise known as Caonabo, that same Indian chieftain whom I caused to be taken by Alonzo de Ojeda and sent to Spain in chains, and who died

of grief on the voyage. Heaven rest his soul, and ease mine of the heavy weight of this grievous sin!'"

"Amen to that, Columbus; but there were many other sins you had to answer for, I'll warrant," interjected Hartley.

"Don't interrupt," exclaimed Arthur, impatiently. "Pay attention, now. 'Before he left the city of Isabella he told me that in the mountains he had filled a great cave with all the gold his subjects had found in many, many years, and he told me that to reach this treasure cave one must pursue the Rio Yaqui, or del Oro, beyond its branching with the Yanico, then go northwardly for more than a furlong, when a narrow ravine would be found opening out of the stream's bed, at the head of which was this cave, its entrance hidden by a screen of vines.'"

As his brother finished, Hartley clutched his arm. "Oh, Art," he burst out excitedly, "what does this description remind you of? Have we seen any cave similar to this one? Have we not arrived, though in a roundabout way, at the locality given in the paper transcribed from the inscription on the silver plate? Think, think, Art, do think!"

"I am thinking," replied Arthur, with an indulgent smile at his brother's injunction. "And I know what you mean, too. You mean to say that the cavern we fell into yesterday was none other than that containing the dead and gone Caonabo's treasure, do you not?"

"Of course, stupid! What other could it be? Only, instead of coming up to it directly from the Yanico, we have flanked it by marching from the mountains, in the direction of Caonabo's hiding-place, which is also mentioned in the account of the conquest. Can't you see? There's still a screen of vines at the cave's mouth above that ravine; only" — and here the boy faltered — "it would have been impossible to reach it from that direction, for no one could have scaled that precipice."

"Well," rejoined Arthur, "that may have been a piece of foolery on the part of the cacique. It is hardly likely that he would tell his deadly enemy, Columbus, — one for whom he is said always to have displayed the utmost contempt, — where his most precious treasure was concealed. He probably was satisfied that it was in an inaccessible spot and wished to tantalize the Spaniards and at the same time, perhaps, hold out a bribe for them to liberate him."

"I believe you're right, Art. It is just like my foolishness to 'fly off the handle' half loaded. You may be slower, but in the end you're surer. That's the explanation exactly."

"Of what?" asked Arthur, laughing. "The explanation of your foolishness — which, by the way, I'm glad to hear you admit — or of the secret of the cacique's treasure?"

"Oh, bother your superior airs. I'll take it all

back — what I said about myself. I meant the treasure, of course. It's there, I do really believe, stowed away in the back part of that cavern, — that is, if somebody hasn't found it out and taken it away."

"And that may have been. We must prepare for disappointment; and the best way to do it is to imagine ourselves just as well off without it. Gold is good enough, Hart, in its way, but it isn't everything. In fact, it was only a few hours ago that we imagined we should never care more for it, you know."

"Yes, I know. But it's the fun of finding it. Just imagine looking upon a treasure that has been hidden away more than four centuries! And it won't be in grains and nuggets, probably, but most of it in articles of Indian workmanship, themselves worth far more than any amount of gold they contain."

"That's true, Hart, and I don't say that I am unmindful of its value archæologically. That's a big word, isn't it? Did I get it right, I wonder? Well, I mean its value to the museums and to men who make a study of ancient objects. I should like to contribute something to the sum of human knowledge, wouldn't you? And since we haven't any high attributes or attainments ourselves, by which we might be able to produce some original work of merit, — why, the next best thing is to do it second-hand. Don't you think so?"

"I suppose so," replied Hartley, dubiously. "But

we haven't got the things yet, and what is more, we never shall get them, unless we bestir ourselves and think of some scheme for getting into the cave — and then out again. For even after we get in, you know, we may be in the plight of the boy who tried the flying machine, 'It ain't so hard to fly, but it's the lighting' — or something of that sort. I don't know, but seems to me we shall have to take Don Esteban into our confidence. What do you say?"

"I think it is a case of necessity, for, supposing we should gain access to the cave and find the treasure, we could not get out of the valley with it unless he found it out. What's more, we can't get out of the valley, anyway. So what are we going to do about it?"

"Oh, I don't know. Give it up, I guess. But one thing we'd better do, and that is go over the account of Caonabo's connection with the first coming of the Spaniards, and see if we have got the bearings correctly."

"Agreed, it's a good suggestion. Get the history, Hart, and we'll settle that right away. Ah, here's the place!"

"'Now, two days after entering the valley of the Yaqui,' the historian says, 'the band of Spaniards finally reached the confines of the Cibao region, where indeed they found the streams running over golden sands and pebbles. On the morning of the third day Columbus entered the region toward which

his gaze had been directed for so many months and even years — Cibao — but instead of finding it the veritable Cipango, as described by the learned Marco Polo, he found that he had been deceived by the similarity of names, and that it was merely a rugged and mountainous region of Haiti, or Hispaniola. But the signs of gold were numerous enough for it to have been indeed the original Cipango (land of golden sands), and they were so convincing as to the country's natural wealth, that he concluded to erect a fort here, on a bluff half surrounded by a crystal stream, the bed of which fairly glistened with particles of gold. This stream was called Yanico by the natives, and the fortress erected here was named Santo Tomas de Yanico.'

"Thus far we have already verified the account as perfectly true, haven't we, Hart? And so up to this point we are absolutely sure of our ground. Wouldn't you say so?"

"Yes, there's no doubt of that, for we've been on the spot."

"Well, then, to connect the locality with Caonabo, the Cacique of the Golden House, we must read on a little farther. We must recollect that after the fort had been built it was garrisoned by a small body of Spanish soldiers under the command of that brave but rash adventurer, Alonzo de Ojeda. If he had not been so cruel, like all those companions of his, however, he would figure in history as one of the

most gallant spirits that ever drew sword on the soil of America. He was that same cavalier who, at an entertainment given in Seville to Queen Isabella, walked out to the end of a beam projecting from the top of the Giralda, the old Moorish tower, two hundred and fifty feet from the ground, and kicked an orange into the air, and then walked back again, to the great admiration of the people assembled in the plaza below. One of the first caballeros to come out to the New World, he was always in the forefront of every skirmish, and engaged in hair-brained escapades.

"Well, Columbus sent him to take charge of Fort St. Thomas, and here he was so closely besieged by Caonabo, who swooped down upon him from the mountains, that he almost succumbed from hunger and thirst. When just at the last extremity, however, he was rescued, and then turned about and chased Caonabo to his lair beyond the crest of the cordilleras on the northern slope. Here he had his head-quarters, called Managua; and by the way, the village is in existence yet, though occupied by blacks instead of Indians.

"Taking with him a few brave comrades, Ojeda made his way through the mountain forests, and finally came upon Caonabo taking a bath in a stream. He had so few men with him that the Indian cacique did not fear and invited him to share his hospitality. Taking a pair of manacles from his saddle-bow, Ojeda showed them to Caonabo, and told him he had

brought them to him as gift from the great king of Spain, his master, whom he and all the other Spaniards served. They were bright and shining, and when Ojeda told the poor simple savage that they were bracelets made of heavenly metal, called 'turey,' he slipped them on his wrists. Instantly seizing the unsuspicious Caonabo, Ojeda, who was a man of immense strength, swung him to the saddle, and at once set off on the back trail for the fort, eventually reaching it and afterward delivering the cacique, a prisoner, to Columbus at Isabella, whence he was sent to Spain; but he died of grief on the voyage."

"His heart was broken," said a deep voice at the door of the hut. "The Spanish fiends killed him — a dastardly outrage!"

XXXI.

A Martyr to Science.

THE boys turned in their hammocks and saw Esteban standing in the doorway, a fierce scowl on his face and his hands clenched. His stern features softened somewhat as they looked at him with inquiry depicted on their countenances, but he shook his shaggy head threateningly, as he added: —

"Yes, they were fiends from inferno, — all of them, nor was Don Cristobal Colon, even, an exception. They killed Caonabo, my grandfather's friend, his benefactor, who sheltered him in extremity."

"Your ancestor, perhaps, but not your grandfather, Esteban."

"What did I say? Yes, of course it was my ancestor. But it may have been my grandfather. Do I not look old?"

"Yes, you do just now," faltered Arthur, while his brother gazed at the man in silent astonishment. Over his rugged features had come a change, and indeed he looked as if he might be any age, even more than a century.

"But, Esteban," insisted Arthur, "Caonabo died

four hundred years ago. It would be impossible for your grandfather to have seen him."

"Impossible? Ah, *Dios!* I have not lived all the time; I have died. Yes, died four hundred years, until I came to this happy valley." His face softened again and he looked younger; perhaps he might have been forty, perhaps five score. The boys could only gaze in awe.

"You have perhaps read," continued Esteban, in a low musical voice, as if engaged in reminiscence, "that amongst the crew of the *Niña*, the smallest vessel that sailed in Don Cristobal's fleet on the first voyage to America, there was a Moor, who, being dark, was called a negro. Señores," — and here his tone became loud and sonorous, his mien majestic, as he rose to his full height and stretched out both hands toward heaven as if in supplication, — "señores, my ancestor was that Moor! He was the 'negro' left in the fort of Navidad, when Don Cristobal Colon sailed away and a garrison of forty men remained to match themselves against the millions of savages in this New World. Señores, reflect, there were no other Europeans in this hemisphere but those forty men, after Don Cristobal had left them alone in that little fort of Navidad. But, even so, had they been kind and just, nothing would have happened to them, for the cacique whose land the fort was on was great of mind and generous. He was also very simple, was this Cacique Guacanagari, and he could not

understand the Spaniards' lust for gold and ignoble things. He gave them all the gold he had, even to the coronet off his head, which was of beaten gold, pure and fine; yet were not the Spaniards satisfied, and they abused him to his face.

"Then, it having come to the ears of Caonabo, the cacique of the mountains, what was happening to him, he made all haste to his assistance. He was of a different tribe from Guacanagari, being of the fierce Carib race, whose home was in the southern islands and in South America. He had strayed to this island in his war canoe, and had become great in this, the country of his adoption. He was called *cacique*, or chief, of the mountains only; but in fact he might have been and really was lord over all, owing to his bravery and warlike disposition. So he came down to the coast, and finding the Spanish garrison straying about in fancied security, having taken by force the Indians' most precious possessions, he fell upon and slew them all, he and his warriors, — all but Esteban the Moor, whose descendant you now see before you!"

"All this we can believe," said Hartley, who had now recovered speech, "for it is history — all except the reference to yourself. For how comes it that you should have existed so long alone here in the mountains?"

"How?" asked Esteban, wearily, passing a hand over his eyes. "Ah, but that is a story too long to

tell at present. When the rainy season comes and the hurricanes; when the floods pour down and keep us indoors all the time, — then will be time to tell you.

"But you do not know all when you say that I am the only descendant of those many millions who has lived till the present. And this reminds me of what I have at last concluded to tell you, that some of those others still live in this valley. Yes," noting their start of surprise, "in the far end of the vale, and I have just come from them, bearing the gracious consent of the Queen that you shall make a visit of ceremony and pay your devotions to her and her court."

"Queen!" ejaculated Arthur. "Court!" cried Hartley. "What queen? What court?"

Each told the other afterward that he looked astonished. And no wonder, for of all the astounding information that might have been given them, this — that there still survived aboriginal Indians in the island of Santo Domingo — was least expected. However, although they thought they knew as a historical fact that the last of the aboriginal Indians here perished more than two centuries ago, they did not purpose to allow their doubts to stand in the way of a possibly fascinating exploration.

"When can we go?" asked Arthur.

"To-day?" inquired Hartley, eagerly.

"No, not to-day, nor perhaps to-morrow," replied Esteban, gravely. "Such a presentation — being

the first that has ever taken place since the Spaniards conquered the royal ancestors of this, my queen — must not be allowed without solemn preparation. The remainder of this day I shall devote to the gathering of precious spices, herbs of virtue, and incense-breathing gums, with which you shall be fumigated, and also you must fast to-morrow from the rising to the going down of the sun. *Adios*, once more, my masters. *Hasta mañana* — till to-morrow." With these words, Esteban bowed with exaggerated dignity, and strode forth again in the direction whence he had come.

"Well, Art, isn't that a nightmare?" said Hartley to his brother, rubbing his eyes and running to the door for a final glimpse of Esteban. He had disappeared, however, and the boy returned to the hammock in which Arthur was sitting. "Art, pinch me, nip me good and hard, for I begin to doubt my senses."

"No need," replied Arthur, "for I heard it all myself. It isn't likely we both would have been mistaken as to the evidence of our ears. But I must say it is strange, very strange."

"Isn't it, though? Just like a wonderful dream. But I guess it won't seem so strange, nor so funny, either, when we come to the fumigating part and the fasting. Tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to lay in as much as I can eat to-day against the privations of the morrow. That Queen may be

all glorious and great, but I'm not going to let the thought of her take my appetite away. Suppose she's some old hag of an Indian who has been passed down from a former generation, and imagines she's a thousand years old or more, as Esteban does. And, I suppose, we'll have to perform the kotow by knocking our foreheads seven times against the palace floor — which likely is of mud — and prostrate ourselves in mock humility before this relic of aboriginal royalty."

"I've a good mind to refuse to go," groaned Arthur. "It will be awful, simply awful. But then, we must go, of course, as martyrs to science, if nothing else. Think of the stir this news will make at home amongst the ethnologists! After all, I'm willing to undergo a great deal for sake of proof that there are Indians yet living in the island."

"Bother the ethnologists! What have they ever done for us — as the Irishman said of posterity — that we should make a sacrifice of ourselves in this way? But I'm anxious to see the Queen, anyway, and we'll take along our camera and have her portrait — that is, if Esteban wouldn't think it a profanation and forbid it. Why, come to think of it, Art, such a portrait would be almost priceless."

"To be sure, we'll take the camera; but I doubt if Esteban will let us use it. He has not seen it yet, has he? No? Then he may be as afraid of it as those Arabs we tried to take in Biskara, last year.

They thought, you know, — and doubtless he will think the same, — that by taking an impression of them on the film in the dark box we would ever after have control over their lives."

"Yes, I remember, and I also recall what a risky thing it was photographing in the cemetery at Tlemcen, when that old sunburnt African sneaked up just as you were pointing the camera at a group of women and was about to stick a knife in your back. There may be some sort of experience like that here, you know, and we'd better go prepared."

"Well, I shall take a revolver, and so will you; but I should not like to use it on old Esteban, or anyone else in this valley."

"I don't know," rejoined Hartley, "think I would if it came to a game of life and death — either their lives or ours. You know the saying, — 'The only good Indian is a dead Indian!' And so far as that goes, I really suppose the museums would give as much for one that had been mummified or preserved in some way as if he were alive, or probably more."

Such was the purport of their conversation that afternoon, while old Esteban was absent on his search for herbs and gums. He came back about dusk, gave a sharp glance at the boys as he passed them swinging in the hammocks, and at once went to the cook-house, whence, after a while, dense clouds of smoke and a terrible odor proclaimed that he was probably concocting his medicines.

It was long after dark; the boys had eaten their fill of the good things left for them in the hut, and were sitting beneath a silk-cotton tree conversing in low tones of their probable fortune, when Esteban appeared before them carrying in each hand a calabash.

"Drink," he said to Arthur, proffering the calabash, which was half full of a black liquid having a very disagreeable odor. Arthur took it, and then the second calabash was presented to Hartley. "Drink," was the command, in the same fierce tone, accompanied by a scowl that wrinkled the man's features into the semblance of a mummy's.

"Hold on, Art," exclaimed Hartley, as his brother raised the vessel to his lips and was about to drink. "I think this is carrying confidence in a comparative stranger a little too far. This stuff may be poison. Who knows? More likely than not. Here, —" turning to Esteban, — "what is this for? Have you any more of it?"

"Yes, my master," answered the man, in a tone of humility. "It is to purge you from all iniquities. Drink, and you will be purified."

"Well, then, if you have more, suppose you drink this dose yourself. It's a poor doctor that won't take his own medicine."

Esteban seized the calabash, placed it to his lips, and drained it at a draught. He displayed no emotion, either of resentment or fear, but as soon as he

had drunk the liquid, he sat down with his head supported against the bole of the silk-cotton tree and fell into a stupor.

"Ha, just as I thought!" exclaimed Hartley. "You see, Art, what we've escaped. Now I'm going to watch Don Esteban till he awakes, if he ever does this side eternity, and—"

He was interrupted by a heavy thud, as of some one falling, and looking around, saw in the dusk his brother stretched upon the ground. His attention had been drawn to Esteban, while he was delivering his harangue, and he had not seen Arthur as he drank the potion, but at once surmised the cause of his collapse.

"Well, here's a pretty pickle!" he exclaimed in sorrowful resentment, as he stooped over to raise his brother from the ground. "Two fools, if I ever met any of that sort, and one of them my own brother. Now I'll put Art in one hammock, and the old man in the other. If this proves fatal to Art, I'll put a bullet through Mr. Esteban, sure as fate. Oh, dear, what if he should die!"

XXXII.

Native Narcotics and Incense.

ALL night long Hartley watched in the dark over those two unconscious ones; all night, with his every sense alert for any sign of wakefulness in either. He fully expected Esteban to come out of his stupor first, more than half believing he was shamming. But the dawn had broken before either moved or showed any sign of life. The boy's anxiety may perhaps better be imagined than described, and the wild thoughts that flitted through his brain, when he reviewed the events that led up to this final catastrophe, almost caused him to spring upon and end the existence of their author.

Esteban came first to consciousness, as he expected, looking about with dull, lack-lustre eyes, just as the darkness was dissipated by the dawn.

He finally caught the stern gaze of the boy fixed upon him, and he neither flinched nor gave token of surprise, but returned it doggedly.

"When will he wake?" asked Hartley, icily, pointing to his brother, who had not yet stirred. "Will he ever wake?"

"He? Oh, you mean your brother? It is time,

almost, now; within half an hour, surely. So you have watched us all the night? That was a waste of time, you had better have slept."

"It would not have been a waste of time if you had not slept, Señor Esteban, — that is, for you."

"Ho, that is it! You suspect me of treachery, and in my own home, to those whom I have invited to partake of my hospitality. Señor, you wrong me."

"I can best judge of that when my brother regains his senses," rejoined Hartley, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, he is doing that now, this moment," replied Esteban, "and if you will ask him I will stake my life that he will tell you he has had a pleasant sleep — has been, in sooth, in paradise."

As Arthur turned over in the hammock his brother darted to his side, seeking his eyes for the first dawn of intelligence. "Where am I?" he murmured. "Is that you, Hart? Why, I dreamed I was floating in the clouds, surrounded by glorious beings, and all, all was delightful."

"It must have been the hasheesh, dear boy, that Esteban made you drink. He, too, has been in paradise, he says; and in fact, if anything had happened to you, he would have now surely been there, or somewhere else, rather than living here with us."

"Oh, don't blame Esteban, for he means well enough," said Arthur, sitting up and looking around.

Then he threw off his brother's arms, after giving him a hearty hug, stood up, and stretched himself.

"I'm perfectly well, and don't feel at all worse, except for a slight headache. You know, of course, why I did it, Hart. I want to see the Queen and her court, and as that was one of the conditions, I accepted it, after coming to the conclusion that I could place implicit trust in Esteban."

"Well," retorted his brother, tartly, "you *are* credulous, and I suppose that I've lost my only chance. But no matter. You go along whenever Esteban is ready, and I'll stay here till you come back."

"I don't want to go without you, Hart," pleaded Arthur. "Perhaps Esteban will let you go, anyway. Won't you, Esteban?"

The old man shook his head, though betraying no animosity toward Hartley, only perfect indifference.

"No, he has not been purified. He cannot go before the Queen."

"Purified? Hear him, will you? I guess I'm as good as he is, with all his boasted virtues, though I may not be a saint."

"Maybe, maybe," muttered Esteban. "No saint myself; but Queen is angel. Come, my master," addressing Arthur, "let Esteban fumigate you with this incense of precious gums, then we will start; for the way is long, your fast will be prolonged, your hunger great."

"My! but that smells good!" exclaimed Hartley. "Here, fumigate me, too." But Esteban, who had brought out a censer made by cutting a calabash in halves and attaching to it strings of twisted bark, waved him aside, as he proceeded to envelop Arthur in a fragrant cloud.

"No, no, you not in right state of mind," he said to Hartley. "Your brother all right. Now he has complied with all the rules, he will go with me. You stay here, and if sometime you repent, then — *quien sabé?* — who knows? — you may be permitted to see Indian Queen."

"Oh, I'm not so smitten. Guess I'll survive. Good-by, Art. Don't let her turn your head, and come back soon as you can."

"Good-by, Hart. You're not offended, I hope?"

"Not at all. But you must get back to-morrow, Art, or day after, for it will be very lonely here without you, remember."

"Yes, Hart, to-morrow, or day after. Can't we, Esteban?"

"To-morrow, — *mañana*, — oh yes, certainly." But he added aside, "That word means 'next day' and perhaps next week, or century!"

As they were starting Hartley noticed that Esteban had, in addition to the ordinary equipment for a journey, both the old Toledos, — the Conquistadores' swords, — which he carried carefully, even with reverence. They had been placed in a corner of the hut,

objects of almost as much adoration to Esteban as if they were gods or fetiches. Asked to explain it, he said that they took him back to the time when the Spaniards came here and the terrible deeds they committed with them.

"Ah, they were valiant swordsmen, those Conquistadores," he told the boys. "They were fierce and cruel, but very brave and expert with the sword and cross-bow. Why, they would repeatedly, when at play, cut off the heads of several Indians, each at a single blow. Yes, indeed. They thought nothing of cleaving an Indian's skull to the chin at one swift stroke. They used to lop off heads as if they were the tops of turnips, and of no more value in the sight of God."

"But what do you want of both swords, Esteban?" demanded Hartley of the Moor. "Better leave one for me; one is mine, anyway, you know."

"Want to show them to Queen," muttered Esteban. "She has heard about old Toledos, with which her ancestors' heads were cut off in sport by the Spaniards, and these will interest her. Stick one up each side her throne, and her subjects think all the Spaniards at last subdued. Make them feel good."

"I don't care how it will make them feel. One of those swords is mine, and I think it's mighty cool of you to take it along without even as much as 'by your leave.'"

"Oh, let him have it, what difference does it

make?" said Arthur. "Surely you don't need it for defence, do you?"

"No, you got your big and little thunder gun, — you got arquebuse," added Esteban. "And then, nobody here to make you afraid. Nobody but yourself."

"Well, then, go along. It really doesn't matter. *Adios!*"

Hartley strolled back to the hut and affected to be employed in putting it in order; but when his brother, overcome at the thought of leaving him alone and in low spirits, darted back to throw his arms around him once more, there were tears in his eyes.

"I won't go, Hart, if you feel badly about it," asserted Arthur, for the second time. "Really, I don't like to leave you this way."

"Nonsense," ejaculated Hartley, already ashamed of his tears. "I was angry, that's all, to be dictated to by such an ignoramus as Esteban. Now go, for the sooner you are off the sooner you get back."

He gave Arthur a hearty squeeze and pushed him out of the hut. When next he looked up the two were far beyond the sugar-cane field, and soon after had disappeared from sight.

It was well toward noon when what appeared to be the eastern wall of the valley, as seen from Esteban's hut, loomed directly above the travellers. All egress was seemingly barred, but when Arthur asked Esteban how they were to get through he explained that this was not the real boundary of the valley,

only a false division barrier. "However," he went on, "though there is a way through, I am not at liberty to let you see it; you must now submit to be blindfolded."

There was nothing else to do, so the young man allowed Esteban to tie a handkerchief over his eyes, though with many misgivings as to the wisdom of such a course. It occurred to him that perhaps the Moor might be guilty of treachery, after all, and having found it difficult to dispose of both his guests, had taken this means of enticing him away from his brother, in order to accomplish his purpose more easily.

But he submitted, and soon after was told to stoop, having done which and at the same time moved forward in a crouching position, he found himself in a cave, or subterranean passage, as he was convinced by the dampness of the air. Half an hour later they emerged into daylight once more, and the sound of murmuring waters below told the blinded one that they were moving along the bank of a stream. Then they plunged into a thick wood, to pass through which took about an hour, Esteban guiding Arthur's footsteps carefully all the time. The wood was silent, except now and then for the shrill cry of an eagle, but when the open was reached beyond it a flood of melody from the throats of a great number of birds saluted the ears of the travellers.

"*Es el Paradiso Indio* — this is Indian Paradise — at last," said Esteban, at the same time removing the bandage from Arthur's eyes. "Look! is it not beautiful; and listen! do not the birds sing joyously? It is but a mile, now, to the palace of the Queen."

They were standing on a low hill, at the base of which ran a sparkling stream, winding amid groups of palms and bamboo clumps over pebbles of glistening quartz. The vale outspread here was just about large enough to be bounded by the vision, and was terminated by the same great walls that held its sister valley in their embrace; but the scenery was yet more pleasing, with feathery-foliaged palms crowning hundreds of swelling knolls, and the intervales, filled apparently with richest soil, in a high state of cultivation. All the products of the tropical flora were here, both wild and cultivated, and their mingled foliage gave that pleasing diversity of aspect which can be seen in no other region than the torrid zone.

Descending the hill and wading the stream, Esteban led the way to a grassy level of many acres, intersected by an avenue of royal palms, which came down from the mountain wall on the south and pursued its majestic course northward until finally lost in distance. Passing between the column-like trunks of two great palms, the travellers reached the centre of the avenue, and facing about, Esteban directed his companion's attention southward. A

cry of admiration burst from Arthur's lips as he looked ahead, through that long tunnel overarched by living canopies of green and enclosed between walls of ivory-gray pillars. For, at the termination of the mile-long, ascending avenue, where it ended at the valley wall, stood a massive structure of stone. Above it towered the cloud-reaching cliffs of rose-red quartz, or porphyry, sweeping around amphitheatre-like, with a fringe of forest at their bases, and a great knoll in front, verdure clad and palm-besprinkled.

As yet, there were no signs of human life, though the trees and shrubbery were animate with beautiful birds of choicest song and plumage. But as the travellers hastened onward, on either hand appeared scattered huts of palm and reeds, embowered amid gardens rioting in luxuriant vegetation, with every kind of fruit and vegetable found native to this island.

"Where are the people?" asked Arthur, at last. "I haven't seen a soul."

"Within their dwellings," replied Esteban, briefly. "Until you have seen the Queen, no one else will be visible."

"But I haven't heard a human voice. Not the sound of one."

"No. Until you hear the Queen's voice, you will hear no other. When you have heard the Queen's, you will wish to hear no other!"

XXXIII.

Visions of Loveliness.

ON and on they went, Arthur wondering, Esteban dilating with pride and conscious power. The sun shone through the latticed roof of palm leaves overhead, making a golden pathway for them as they walked. At last they came near to the upper end of this royal avenue, where it broadened out and formed a semicircle, sweeping around to meet the columned corridors which flanked the palace on one side and the other.

Instead of mounting the ranges of stone steps that gave direct access to the structure before them, Esteban turned off to the right and entered a palm-thatched house, long and low, which stood within a garden of flowers showing evidences of careful culture. Like the other huts and houses they had seen, this one also was silent, and when its doorway had been passed was found to be tenantless.

And yet, there were signs enough of recent human occupancy. The floor of beaten clay was strewn with fresh reeds and flowers, two grass hammocks were suspended from the rafters, and across each hammock had been thrown a white robe made

of silk-cotton. There was but one apartment in the house, and the only furniture consisted of Indian stools or benches, made of wood and shaped like iguanas and alligators, with heads and tails erect, jewels for eyes, and broad backs.

Depositing in a corner the burden he had carried all day long so patiently, Esteban told Arthur to retire behind a screen of leaves hung at the farther end of the room, divest himself of his dust-stained outer garments, and put on one of the robes, which he then gave him for the purpose. He would find water in calabashes for laving his hands and face, with soft towels of native cotton, already supplied.

Arthur followed his directions, and soon re-appeared garbed in the robe of silk-cotton, which was as lustrous as satin, soft as down, and almost as light as cobwebs. He found Esteban similarly attired, and holding in his hands the Toledos, one of which he gave him.

"This may seem foolish to you," he explained, "but if you will follow my directions a little longer, you will then be free to do as you please. In order to get my Queen to allow me to present you, I had to inform her you were here as an ambassador from a distant sovereign — from *El Rey grande de los Estados Unidos*, — from the great King of the United States; and as symbols of authority you bore these swords, which had been taken from the Spaniards, anciently enemies of her ancestors, in

personal combat. Some intelligence of the war your people had with the Spaniards in Cuba has reached her, but as she, you know, cannot speak any language but the aboriginal Indian, she gets very little news of any sort. I am her only interpreter, and a very poor one. Ah, if you could only speak her language! What a world of spiritual knowledge you might unfold to this, my Queen!"

"No doubt I can learn," answered Arthur, eagerly. "Most gladly would I acquire her language, if possible, in order to find out many things which now are hidden from me." He had in mind, of course, the secret of the cave, but to his credit, let it be said, he also wished to add to his stock of general knowledge.

The old man looked at him keenly, as though to divine his thoughts, then shook his head in his characteristic way, and went on with his directions: —

"Take this sword, hold it in front of you when you reach yonder steps, and walk forward with your eyes cast down. Do not once look up, but keep by my side, for not only would I approach my Queen with proper reverence, but if you appeared too bold or froward she might fly and hide herself."

Outwardly calm and humble in mien, but inwardly rebellious at the ridiculous spectacle he was making of himself, Arthur obeyed his uncouth mentor implicitly, and with head bent forward and eyes seeking the ground, walked by his side.

They ascended the ranges of stone steps together, entered the shadow of the portal, and halted. They were at the entrance of a vast hall, how broad, how long, or how high, Arthur did not venture then to ascertain. They went forward, their footsteps echoing, until finally they stood in front of a broad dais raised above the floor by quite a space. Above them, far overhead, was a confused sound as of myriad wings, but directly in front the young man heard a rustling like that of silk or satin robes, and the murmur of women's voices.

Still he dared not look up, and even when he heard Esteban talking in an unknown tongue, he kept his gaze on the floor. At last the old man concluded his speech of presentation, and after a brief silence another voice, as musical as running water and with a sweet cadence in it like a wood dove's note, reached his ears. Soon it ceased, and he felt Esteban nudge him gently. "Look up," he whispered. "My Queen has welcomed you to her court, and you must reply."

Arthur looked up, for the first time seeing what was before him. When he heard the voice, he had said to himself: "That is not an old crone speaking. Perhaps Hart was mistaken, and the Queen may not be so very aged!"

But he was not prepared for the vision of youth and loveliness that met his gaze as he looked in the direction whence the voice had come. It almost took

his breath away, and the little speech he had framed to utter in Spanish died upon his lips. For there before him, about ten feet away, was the most beautiful woman he had ever beheld. In truth, he had never imagined one half so beautiful, far less had he met her. She rested in a hollow, carved from the living rock, clad in a white robe of flossy silk-cotton, gathered at the waist by a golden girdle; on her head a coronet of beaten gold, from beneath which fell a flood of raven tresses; and her eyes, black as her hair, were deep and luminous. Her complexion was not dark, like Esteban's, but of a creamy hue, with cheeks like the heart of a pomegranate, and lips coral red, between which gleamed ivory-white teeth, showing in a gracious smile.

She was probably smiling at the young man's confusion; and yet there was a startled look in her eyes, and in the eyes of the dozen dusky maidens ranged about her on each side the throne. For these maids of honor formed a semicircle, of which the central figure was their Queen, like a beautiful setting for a lovelier picture. The whole scene was so unreal that Arthur could hardly believe his senses; but at last, realizing that he was standing there dumb and awkward, by a great effort he gained his voice and made as eloquent a speech as possible under the circumstances. But not until he noted the mystified expression of the Queen's lovely face, and saw several of her maidens place their fingers to their shell-

like ears as if to keep out the sound of his voice, did he realize that somehow he had made a grave mistake. He concluded, however, with a grand peroration, in which the magnitude of his native country was dilated upon, and the greatness of its ruler set forth in rounded periods.

Then he turned to Esteban for the sword he held, which he was to place with his own and lay at the feet of the Queen; but the Moor withheld it, saying in a fierce whisper: —

"What is this unknown language you have spoken in? I cannot translate it. I do not understand it. Base boy, you have trifled with us all; you have shown no reverence for my Queen!"

Arthur looked at him in astonishment. Then he suddenly realized what he had done: that in his confusion he had spoken in English instead of Spanish, and his fine speech was worse than wasted!

For an instant he was overcome by his emotion, but soon the ridiculous feature got uppermost, and he laughed aloud. This was, as it happened, the one thing necessary to dispel the artificial air of solemnity and ceremony about the affair, for his laugh was followed by a musical peal from the Queen herself, in which her maidens were not slow to join. They were of the kind that would much rather look sweet than sour, or even solemn, and gladly welcomed the opportunity for a little fun.

Not so the Moor, however, for as master of cere-

monies and general manager of the court, he felt his dignity offended. He seized the sword he carried by the hilt, and bade Arthur take his and defend himself. So sudden was his onslaught that the young man had hardly time to throw himself on guard when a swift stroke descended. He parried it quickly, by a swift turn of the wrist, at the same time throwing himself backward, but it was immediately followed by another. This also he warded off, for he was an accomplished swordsman, and he soon found that he could do with Esteban as he wished. The latter was perhaps an adept in the days of his youth, but his joints were now rather stiff, and besides his "play" was antiquated.

"Stop, Esteban," cried Arthur. "Do you want me to kill you? I can, and by the powers I will, if it comes to either you or me! Drop your sword and hear me. See, your Queen motions to you!"

Esteban's blows were wildly delivered all this time, and Arthur was kept busy dodging them, so that his speech was rather fragmentary; but when at last the old Moor was convinced that his Queen ordered him to stop, he lowered his point. It was done reluctantly, however, not from choice, and when he again made as though he would take advantage of the truce to run his opponent through, Arthur by a swift, dexterous movement of his blade sent Esteban's Toledo flying into the air across the hall, where it fell with a clang upon the pavement.

"Now, another movement like that and I will run you through," he sternly said, thoroughly aroused. "If you will not respect your Queen, then you shall my strength. Remember, now!"

Esteban glared at him a moment, then bowed and turned toward the throne, where, huddled together like a flock of frightened partridges, the pretty brown maidens had gathered about their mistress. She paid no attention, either to them or to Esteban, but throwing the bevy of maidens aside, rose from her seat, walked toward the astonished young man, and held out her hand. Taking the tips of her slender fingers in his, Arthur raised them to his lips, after the manner which he had read in books of chivalry the gallant knights-errant used toward their liege ladies.

"My!" he said to himself, "but I'm glad Hart isn't here to see this. I should never hear the last of it! But I suppose, though, this is the proper thing to do!"

It seemed to have been expected, for the lady beamed upon him approvingly; then, flashing upon poor Esteban a glance of scorn, she swept back to her seat upon the throne.

Now, this was not a happy state of affairs for Arthur, any more than it was agreeable to the Moor, for the latter was the only medium of communication of the former with the Queen, who could not understand a word of either Spanish or English. Esteban

must be propitiated, of course, and Arthur set himself to the task with all the address he could command. He finally convinced the sullen Moor that his speech in English was not intended as an affront, and offered to make it over, as nearly as he could recollect, in Spanish, which Esteban would translate to the Queen.

This offer was communicated to her Majesty, who was gracious enough to signify her pleasure for them to proceed; and so the whole thing was gone over again almost word for word, only in Spanish this time, which Esteban translated into Indian.

The Queen and her ladies of honor seemed very much impressed with the grandeur of "*los Estados Unidos del Norte America, y el Rey grande*," and after the swords were finally presented in due form, the court was declared adjourned.

XXXIV.

Queen of the Golden Flower.

WHEN we say the court was declared adjourned, we mean to imply merely that the proceedings before it came to an end. There was no formal adjournment, no bespangled page or equerry to blow a trumpet and wake the echoes while he announced it as the pleasure of the Queen that the ceremonies should cease. No, indeed. When the presentation had been made, there was nothing more to do; so the Queen left her massive throne with a sigh of relief, gave a command to her maidens, and away they went, stately Queen and graceful maids of honor, trooping out toward the sunshine.

The great hall was dark and gloomy. Outside the sun shone, birds sang, and flowers filled the air with perfume; but having no orders to follow after, the Moor and the young American stood where they were. At the topmost step, however, the Queen seemed to bethink herself of her guests, and sent a maiden back to notify them that it was her pleasure they should meet her at a kiosk in the garden. So they followed after at a respectful distance, the Moor and the Yankee, each thinking hard what he

should do next, and wondering when and how he should do it.

The Moor, as may have already been made quite apparent, was a capricious old fellow. Just when one expected him to be something or other, he was pretty sure to be something else. Arthur fully expected him to be surly and jealous, now, owing to the unusual attention that he — Arthur — had received from the Queen. But it would seem from his behavior now that it was, of all things, that which he would have chosen to happen. He was not only cheerful, but actually overflowing with good spirits. Instead, then, of proving a veritable dog in the manger, as he might have done, he showed what a really noble nature was his, by making himself particularly agreeable. As they walked out to meet the ladies, he said to Arthur: —

"My boy, you have pleased my Queen, and I am truly glad. Lo, these many moons, yea, for several months, she has been depressed and unhappy; now, as you see, she is exhilarated. Your coming has infused new life into the court. I never saw her and her maidens so light-hearted and gay. It is strange, too, for though you are a good, wholesome-looking boy, smooth of speech and fair to look upon, there is nothing really extraordinary in your appearance."

"Perhaps you mistake the cause of it all," answered Arthur, modestly. "Perhaps the sight of the Toledos may have awakened tender memories, or the information we imparted have aroused her soul."

"True, it may have been. At all events, her lethargy is broken. Now, listen: you will need me as an interpreter, for no word, either of Spanish or English, does she understand. But not for long. I will give you a few key words, by which you will soon find the road to conversation, and in a few days, at most, you will be able to dispense with my presence. Her language, as you should know, is the ancient Arawak, once spoken in all the islands of the Indies. If you can only master that, or a portion of it, you can easily converse with her and my people. It is not hard to learn."

"Arawak?" exclaimed Arthur. "Why, I have a vocabulary containing the principal words in that language, given me by a learned professor before I left the States. It is in a pocket of my coat, which I left in the house where we changed our garments."

"Good!" rejoined Esteban. "You will not need me at all, perhaps. I will go get it while you proceed to the kiosk, — that little building under the palms, straight ahead of you."

Esteban hastened off to find the pamphlet, while Arthur did as directed and followed his nose. As he neared the kiosk he heard the sound of laughter coming forth from it, and when he appeared at the entrance, the Queen looked up with a smile and invited him by a gesture to seat himself by her side.

The maidens looked aghast at this breach of royal etiquette, but they offered no protest in words. In-

deed, when they thought it over, they could find no precedent, either, for anything at all that had happened that day, since no one had ever been received before at their court. It was a novelty, and as they had been almost dying for a novelty, when this young man came and gave them a new sensation, they concluded that his advent was a blessing. At all events, their Queen could do no wrong, and as she had invited him to sit beside her, of course that must be right.

Summoning all his courage, Arthur took the indicated seat, though he would have preferred to stand in her presence, and tried to look unconscious of the united gaze, now turned upon him, of thirteen lovely damsels. Of course he failed in this most miserably, and in a minute was blushing furiously, despite his brave attempt to look unconcerned. If there had only been pockets of some kind in that robe of state, in which he could have hidden his hands, or if he could have spoken even a single word to the Queen, in any language whatever, his dreadful embarrassment might have been somewhat relieved.

But the Queen and her maidens did not understand a sensation they had never experienced, as they were so simple and direct that the thought of confusion or embarrassment never entered their minds. When, therefore, they saw the red blood streak the young man's cheeks, their curiosity was greatly excited. Her own cheeks and those of her maidens were as

plump and fruity-hued as a mango, with a rich blush that rarely changed, and she was puzzled. She held out both hands with a helpless gesture, and as she did so could not but notice the difference between them and his; her own, though so shapely and slender, being golden brown in hue, while his showed white, and the blue veins could be traced through all the tan.

This fact formed another theme for speculation, and drew attention anew to the hapless Arthur, when finally, to his great comfort, the situation was relieved by the appearance of Esteban with the book.

As he explained what it was to the Queen, her interest was at once excited and she seized it eagerly. She presumably had never seen a printed page before, and when told that every word had a meaning and that her own language was by these words made intelligible to the stranger, her wonder and enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Nor were the maidens less wonderstruck than their Queen, for the mere fact that a spoken speech could be preserved in letters and fixed forever in type was also new to them, apparently.

They gathered close around while Arthur, now no longer embarrassed, since he had something to fix his attention, played the rôle of schoolmaster to this band of grown-up children.

Esteban acted as interpreter, at first, in order to set the wheel of knowledge going round, then quietly

slipped away and left the young schoolmaster to his own resources. The latter did not notice his departure, so absorbed was he in his new vocation, neither probably did any of his pupils. All eyes were fixed on the book, only to be removed when it was necessary to seek some object, inside the kiosk or out, for which a name was desired, or as a means of comparison.

Lightly touching the robe the Queen had on, Arthur desired her to give its name. He could not ask the question in words, but she readily divined his meaning, and answered at once. Then other objects were named, the Queen giving the Arawak and Arthur the Spanish, or English, both turning to the book for the equivalent words, thus fixing them in memory. It was in this manner that they soon came to a common ground for understanding. The Arawak for a hut or house was "*bohio*," for the country of the Queen's ancestors, "*Quisqueya*," by which all the western part of Santo Domingo was known. When the Queen saw Arthur turn to the word in print and pronounce it correctly before she had told him how, she was surprised beyond measure.

She chatted awhile with her maidens, then turned to the master and pointing to herself said, "Ana-ca-o-na." Arthur bowed low, and turning to the vocabulary found the word and its meaning, "*Anacaona*, or the Golden Flower — Queen of the Golden Flower." The Queen had meant to tell him that her name was

Anacaona, and he had shown her not only that her name was in his vocabulary, but that it signified in English the Golden Flower, in Spanish, "*Flor del Oro!*"

On receipt of this information the Queen was greatly excited. She rose, and pacing up and down declaimed to her maidens in musical speech something Arthur could not understand, but the purport of which he could readily guess. Many days afterward, when they had progressed further, the Queen told Arthur the story, which he had already divined and which for the sake of continuity will be narrated now.

She bore a historic name. The first Anacaona ever known to Europeans was the sister of Caonabo, the chief whose fortunes we have followed now and then already. She was married to a cacique named Behechio, who lived on the side of the mountains far distant from the first settlements founded by the Spaniards, and so for a few years after their arrival was exempt from disturbance by them. But the time came, and it was just after Columbus had been sent home to Spain from this island in chains, that Behechio was hounded down and murdered.

Don Bartholomew, the noble brother of Christopher Columbus, who was "Adelantado" of Santo Domingo, had charge of all matters while the Admiral was away. In his marches about the island to keep his own people, the Spaniards, in subjection, he encountered

the forces sent out by Behechio's widow to oppose the invaders. As he had no evil intention toward them, Don Bartholomew marched into the town where Anacaona resided, and was received by her in great state. He and his soldiers were feasted and entertained with Indian games, and when they finally parted from their new-found friends it was with feelings of good-will on either side.

Anacaona was a tall and stately dame, handsome and hospitable. Don Bartholomew was a soldier, every inch of him, honest and dignified, and one who could appreciate beauty and goodness at its full worth. So it was not long before he paid another visit to the Queen of the Golden Flower, and was, if possible, even more pleasantly entertained. It was on his return from this second visit that he was met by messengers from the new governor, who had been sent out by King Ferdinand, who ordered him to report forthwith at the capital. Arrived there, Don Bartholomew found his brother Christopher in prison, where he himself soon joined him, and soon afterward both were sent home to Spain in chains.

The new governor was superseded by another, the ever infamous Nicolas de Ovando, who was a knight of high degree but at the same time the most murderous scoundrel that ever came from Spain to the shores of America. Learning that Anacaona had entertained Don Bartholomew Columbus, he became suspicious of her at once, and set out to punish her.

When she heard of his coming, she set forth the same sort of entertainment she had given Don Bartholomew, invited him to a banquet, and feasted him and all his soldiers. But, when the feasting was at its height, this bloodthirsty Spaniard gave a prearranged signal to his soldiers, and they fell upon the unsuspicious Indians so fiercely that nearly all were slaughtered without offering any resistance at all. Queen Anacaona herself was seized and bound, taken to the capital and burned alive, on a spot where a statue of herself and Columbus may be seen to-day.

These are the historical facts about the original Anacaona, "Queen of the Golden Flower," whose descendant the beautiful maiden found by Arthur hidden away in the mountains of the island claimed to be. She was perhaps a queen or princess only in name, and one with very few subjects to do her honor; but she was lovely enough, Arthur thought, both in appearance and character, to merit more than an insignificant kingdom in the midst of a wilderness, like the one she ruled over when he discovered her.

XXXV.

A Royal Road to Learning.

THAT was certainly a royal road to learning along which Arthur and his pupils were travelling at such a rapid pace.

Before the day was ended they had come to quite a good understanding as to many of the objects with which at noon neither had a mutual acquaintance. It may have been owing to the fact that these maidens were by nature receptive and that they had so long been deprived of mental food. They were as creatures starving for intellectual nourishment, and they absorbed with great avidity every mite that was put before them. Beginning, as we have seen, with the objects immediately at hand, the master extended his excursions little by little, until not only nouns but verbs and adjectives became the subjects of their attacks.

Without going so far into the subject that there may be danger of getting beyond our depth, let us take one or two examples in the word-building system by which the young master and his pupils came to a common plane of conversation. It must be remembered, in the first place, that the really essential words

in any language — that is, the words essential to the carrying on of a simple conversation and expressing actual needs — are comparatively few in number. Some writers say a thousand will do, others even declare they can get along with a few hundred.

Now, for example, there was the word *Bo-he-chio*, which was derived from *bo*, meaning "great"; *hec*, a "chief" or "sovereign"; and *hio*, a "country": *Bohechio*, "the ruler over a great country." The Queen's name was formed from *Ana*, a "flower," and *caona*, "fine gold": *Anacaona*, "the flower of fine gold."

Likewise the name of *Caonabo*, the brother of her remote ancestor, was derived from *Caona*, "fine gold," and *bo*, a "chief" or "cacique." So we have from this *Caonabo*, "the golden cacique," or as some have translated it, "Chief of the Golden House." Whichever way we read, the words mean that he was lord over a golden treasure; and this again leads us up to the object which the young men had in sight when they first started out on their adventures. So now, link by link, the chain was being forged by which Arthur hoped to draw that golden treasure from its hiding-place in these very mountains.

When in the course of their study they came to such words as these, the Queen would launch forth into a little speech, of which only a word was now and then intelligible to Arthur; but from her gestures he knew that it was of that very treasure she was

speaking, for she pointed toward the mountain wall back of them, and mentioned the words for gold and Caonabo several times. He "kept track" of all these straws that might show him the drift of the current, and a few days later — as we shall see — gathered them into a chain of evidence that led him straight into the veritable cavern holding the cacique's gold.

After several hours of work, and when at last the sun was sinking toward the horizon, the pretty students showed signs of weariness. There were many half-stifled yawns on the part of the maids of honor, and even the eager Queen could no longer keep her attention to the task. So, when Arthur noticed it, he concluded to bring the lesson to an end with two words which he knew would touch sympathetic chords. One was "*areito*," the name for the ancient Indian songs, and the other "*diumba*," an indigenous dance.

As he uttered them the Queen rose and gave a signal. Standing in the centre of the kiosk, with her maidens ranged around her in a circle, she started a chant, the refrain of which they took up at intervals, keeping time to their rhythmic measures by a slow-stepping dance. The music was a wild, weird melody of unearthly sweetness, and as it died away left a haunting impression of unutterable sadness. The *areito* was the ancient Indian chant to their gods, whom they imagined dwelt in a vast cavern, — prob-

ably the very one by which the boys had entered the valley, — and of whom they made little images which they called "*zemes*," and worshipped as their representatives. The Indian ancestors of the Queen had no conception of the true God, who reigns supreme in the heavens, maker of all created things; and it was probable, Arthur thought, that Anacaona still shared their erroneous beliefs in the efficacy of appeals to images of wood and stone. When his knowledge of her language should be sufficient for the purpose, he vowed to himself he would find out the true status of her religious belief, and if possible set her right in the matter as it seemed right to him.

But the dance and song were ended. While the weary maidens waited, the Queen extended her hand to Arthur and thanked him for his endeavors to enlighten her ignorance, promising to renew the meeting on the morrow. He did not understand all she said, and it was mainly through her keen intuition that she grasped his meaning when he stammered something about being obliged to return early the next day to his brother. She knew he had a brother, for Esteban had told her; and he knew and used the Arawak term for brother, so she readily guessed the rest.

To reassure him she said, "Esteban — go — to-morrow, come — brother."

Arthur's look of alarm disconcerted her for a moment, but she added, "Esteban *ni-ta-i-no* — good per-

son," and nodded her pretty head emphatically. Then she said, "Till to-morrow," and pointing to a small boy, who had come noiselessly into the kiosk meanwhile, she walked away, followed by her train.

Arthur understood, of course, that the boy was to be his guide, or valet, and when he beckoned went after him without a word. The youngster led the way to a thatched hut within a garden, and standing aside at the entrance bade him enter. Within he found a hammock swung, a dim light fitfully gleaming from a torch of gum wood, and a table set for him with every viand known to the Indian cuisine.

His little valet, who was about ten years old, nearly naked as to costume, and shapely as a cupid, anticipated every want, and when the meal was over cleared away the table, set the house in order, and then signified that unless required further he would go. Arthur tried to make friends and talk with him, but the child was as timid as a fawn, and when he saw that no further service was actually required of him, took to his heels and disappeared.

So Arthur was left alone to reflect upon the strange occurrences of the day. So strange, indeed, they seemed but the disordered fancies of a dream, rather than the sober happenings of wakeful hours. The thought uppermost, however, was of his brother. What had happened to him, while he was basking in the favor of the Queen and her court? He reproached himself with thoughtlessness, and when

he recalled the silent slipping away of the Moor, so evidently desirous of escaping without attracting his attention, his heart sank within him, for he feared he might yet prove treacherous.

Still, the Queen was honest, pure as daylight, sweet as sunlight, and she had assured him in effect that no harm should come to Hartley; in fact, that she herself had sent for him. And thus, with his last waking thoughts of these two, Arthur finally fell asleep, and when he awoke the birds were singing their matins.

Little Cupid was on hand to conduct Arthur to the bath, which was in a pool of pearl-tinted water beneath a palm, where a gurgling brook ran slowly between the bamboo banks at the foot of the garden. While his master was in the water Cupid climbed a palm tree and threw down some cocoanuts. Then he descended, cut off the end of a nut with a big knife, and presented it to Arthur with its ivory cup filled with a cool and delicious liquid that he drank with pleasure. Speeding ahead of him to the hut, the boy had a cup of coffee awaiting Arthur when he arrived, and also a calabash piled high with fruits. There were all sorts, such as oranges, pineapples, custard apples, mangos, guavas, and sapadillas, which grew in the gardens everywhere and were so abundant that many were never gathered at all, and so went to waste.

Arthur had hoped for some news of his brother by

this time. But the morning went and noon drew nigh, and still no tidings, good or bad. He felt that he would have gone to him, if he had but known the way; but that interval which he had traversed blindfolded it was impossible for him now to bridge. Esteban may have been merely taking ordinary precautions in observing so much secrecy, but it would appear that there was a method in all he did. If Arthur had but known, something was transpiring over the ridge that was to affect all his future and bring about a change of fortune which was to decide his destiny. But he knew only that Esteban came not, and no message from Hartley reached him that forenoon.

It was with a sad heart, and oppressed by many forebodings, that he obeyed a command from the Queen and met her and the maidens in the kiosk. They were merry, at all events, and their high spirits were infectious, particularly when the Queen shook her head at sight of his gloomy countenance and bade him be of good cheer.

"He will come," she said. "He will come," the merry maidens repeated; although it is doubtful if they understood what they said.

The lessons dragged wearily that day, and at last the Queen perceived that her teacher's thoughts were far away, and in order to divert him proposed a ramble through the groves. Arthur had expressed wonder that he had seen so few people in the valley,

and she said playfully she would show him some. So they trooped along, a merry, chattering band, visiting house after house, and the young man was surprised to find every one filled with smiling women and children, subjects of the Queen, who, the moment she appeared, prostrated themselves before her, their faces to the ground.

She raised them all, every one, with words of cheer, and laughingly bade them proceed with their employments. Some were weaving wonderful blankets and scarfs of wool and cotton on primitive looms, some were making pottery, which others were adorning with strange figures, others were working as goldsmiths and evoking forms of plants and animals from the precious metal with blowpipes and fires of charcoal. Out in the fields and in the gardens, men and boys were cultivating the soil, using no other instruments than sharp sticks for ploughs and hoes. All were busy, all quiet, and without an exception all seemed happy and contented.

What particularly struck Arthur as very strange was the universal youthfulness of all, for there seemed to be no old people in the valley. Some might have reached middle age, and many others were apparently in their teens, but there were no aged persons. Arthur tried to explain to the Queen his astonishment at this, but either she had become accustomed to the fact, or else she could not understand him, for he got no satisfaction from her. She had left off

her golden coronet, and her wealth of black tresses was adorned merely with brilliant flowers, which, if possible, enhanced her rare beauty and made her seem more youthful than she appeared the day before. But for her stately mien, and the look of command in her eyes which was ever present, even when she smiled, she might have been taken for one of her own maids of honor, as she tripped so daintily about with sandalled feet.

XXXVI.

The Cacique's Treasure at Last.

THOUGH the students were afield, their lessons were being studied just the same. Their open book was Nature, and from its pages they read as they ran.

A plant grew in a garden near the avenue through which they were passing. It had broad, velvety leaves and was a conspicuous object, even amongst so much strange vegetation. One of the maids pointed to it, and said to Arthur, "*Coiba*," and another said "*Tabaco*," rubbing her palms together as if rolling the leaves between them. By this, of course, Arthur understood that it was the tobacco plant, the use, or abuse, of which the Indians knew centuries ago. "*Pipa, cachimbo*," said the Queen, pursing up her coral lips as if puffing out smoke, and looking at the young man roguishly. This was meant to imply that the tobacco was smoked in a pipe — Indian, *cachimbo* — a pipe with a double stem, like the letter Y.

Many names which they gave him as those of plants and trees, and which they derived from their

ancestors, are those by which they are known in some parts of the civilized world to-day. Among these are the *cacao*, or cocoa tree, from which the chocolate bean is obtained; *caoban*, or mahogany; *coco*, or cocoa palm; *ceiba*, or silk-cotton; *aji*, or red pepper; *guaba*, or guava fruit, from which the delicious jelly is made; *guayabo*, a forest tree; *yucca*, an edible root; *cana*, a reed, etc. In this manner, by taking object lessons out of Nature's open book, as already stated, these students acquired and conveyed information of mutual interest.

But still, notwithstanding the Queen's attempt to interest her guest, the anxious look on his face did not quite disappear. Her sympathetic nature could not endure this longer without means of expressing her deep concern, and she strove to find some word or words to convey her feelings. If she could have found those words there is no doubt she would have offered him the half of her kingdom, if only he would have been made happy thereby. As they walked along the royal avenue, above them the o'erarching fronds of the palms, in front the towering palace walls, the Queen hung her head in thought. At last she threw it back with a rapid movement that sent her tresses rippling to her waist, and commanding Arthur's attention by a glance said to him: —

"*Caona, Cacique Behechio Caonabo, bohio,*" at the same time pointing in the direction of the palace. What she meant to convey was: "There is the

house containing the golden treasures of Caciques Caonabo and Behechio."

She watched eagerly his change of expression, and noted with satisfaction the brightening of his eyes and his heightened color. He was no longer listless or distrait, but wide awake and alert. "Come, then," she said in Arawak, and seizing one of his hands. "If only that is necessary to make you happy, it shall be yours."

He did not understand her words, but there was no mistaking the meaning, for her beautiful face was eloquent with a generous impulse. Arthur laughed for the first time that day, as he found himself borne forward by the Queen and her maidens in their impetuous charge upon the palace. In a few moments they were waking the echoes of the great corridor with the patter of their feet and the sound of their voices. They traversed the hall, which Arthur now saw was not of man's handiwork, but of Nature's forming, being the vast vestibule to a cavern. The columns were stalactites and stalagmites, some of them almost translucent and wonderfully regular in their arrangement. Even the throne, which in his confusion of the day before Arthur would have sworn was carved from ivory or alabaster, was a natural formation, though it had been rough-hewn into shape by some aboriginal sculptor. The Queen laughed merrily as she saw him gazing at the now vacant seat which she had graced with her presence

the day before, and at a signal her maids ranged themselves around on either side, as she sank gracefully into it.

The wall seemed solid behind them and Arthur was wondering where the entrance to the cavern was situated, when at another sign the maids dispersed, and the Queen beckoned him to come to her. First, however, she requested him to take up the swords, which were lying where they had been left the day before, and fetch them with him. As he neared the throne the Queen held out her hand, and he assisted her to rise, not forgetting a respectful salute, such as he had bestowed when she so graciously extended her fingers after he had overcome Esteban in the sword play of the preceding day.

She insisted on carrying one of the swords herself, made him take the other, and thus equipped they went behind the throne, where an opening was revealed large enough for them to enter while standing almost erect. Stepping aside, the Queen motioned Arthur to lead the way, which he did, soon finding himself within a room of goodly dimensions, but not so large as the hall without. It was rather dark there, and after the maids had come in the Queen ordered them to bring out some torches, which were stacked up in a corner of the cavern. They were made of fragrant gums, wrapped in bark bound about with withes, and near them was a pile of flints, with which the girls attempted to strike fire for the pur-

pose of lighting them. When Arthur saw their pitiful efforts to bring fire from the flints, he drew from his pocket a silver match-box and quickly lighted one of the torches before they were aware of what he was doing.

When finally they understood that he had brought fire from a small bit of stick, they crowded around in wonder, for they had never seen a match before and were lost in amazement. He could not do otherwise than present the box to the Queen, and she received it with the unfeigned pleasure that a child might have manifested in a new toy. Nothing would satisfy her and those other simple children of nature but experimenting with the matches, until nearly all had been lighted, and it was with difficulty that Arthur persuaded them to keep a few for emergencies, as he had no others with him, and they might be needed before they got through with their investigation. The Queen pouted prettily, for she was used to having her own way, and she did not see why, if the lighting of the matches pleased her, she should not use them up.

However, after this diversion the torches were finally lighted, and they all went toward the back part of the room. There, indeed, a sight met their eyes that drew an exclamation of astonishment and delight from the young man; for, ranged against the wall, on natural shelves one above another, were hundreds and perhaps thousands of objects, appar-

ently of solid gold. There were images of birds and monkeys, uncouth deities with arms extended and mouths agape, some more than two feet in height, and besides these there were great nuggets, as well as heaps of gold in flakes and grains. The golden grains were heaped up like corn in a granary, and, with the nuggets, shimmering masses of precious metal, probably aggregated more than three million dollars in value.

Now it was the Queen's turn to laugh, when Arthur, astonished at the spectacle, turned to her and asked if it were really gold those objects were made of, and if those heaps were also gold all through, or only on the surface.

"*Caona* — fine gold," answered the Queen, with a merry ripple of laughter. "Why not? This is the treasure of Caonabo and Behechio. It was theirs; it is mine." She told him to plunge his hand into one of the heaps and he then would be convinced. But he took her word for it and refused, so at her command one of the maidens thrust her little brown hand into a glistening heap until her arm was elbow deep, and withdrew it with sparkling flakes attached, as similar ones were to the hoops of the Spaniards water casks in the Rio del Oro, four hundred years before.

The Queen prodded some of the images with her sword, and they came rattling down from their perches, where they had probably sat hundreds of

years, with such a musically metallic tinkle that Arthur was convinced they were, as she said, gold of the finest quality.

He took up the deposed deities with great care and set them back in their places, handling them almost reverently, — not so much for what they represented as images, but for their intrinsic worth.

How he wished Hartley could have been there to see this display of wealth, to feast his eyes on the departed caciques' treasures, which at last had been so strangely revealed. He asked the Queen if he might not take a few of the smaller objects out to show his brother when they should meet again, and when at last she understood the purport of his request, she said, with a shrug of indifference: "Certainly, take them all. This treasure once belonged to my ancestors; they are dead; it is now mine — it was mine — but now it is yours, for I give it to you!"

"Give it to me?" exclaimed Arthur, when after a while he comprehended fully what she had said. "Give this treasure to me? No, no. I have done nothing to earn it. Why should you?"

Why should she, indeed? And yet his blood tingled at the possibilities, the potentialities, implied by the possession of so much wealth. There was gold enough here to erect a model town, enough to build schools for the education of poor but deserving thousands, enough to ameliorate the condition of

thousands more who had to dwell in filth and misery. What could he not do if all this wealth were his?

It had lain here untouched for centuries, as useless as if at the bottom of the sea; and would it not be better far if it were in the hands of some one who could use it to the best advantage, who would make it a blessing, and not a curse, to humanity?

Arthur had his own views as to the uses of wealth, holding that millionaires should regard themselves as trustees, merely, of what the Creator gave into their hands, and not the absolute owners of their temporary possessions. This may be neither here nor there; but, still, he felt convinced that the opportunity was now presented by which he could put his theories into practice and become a benefactor to mankind.

"Why should I?" the Queen repeated after him. "Because it is mine, and I choose to do this thing. It is nothing. Take it, and do with it as you will!"

There could be no doubt, either as to her ownership of the treasure, or her sincerity in offering it to him, but still the young man was bewildered. He could scarcely believe it possible for such good fortune to be his. As to the Queen, now that she had guided him to the treasure, her interest in the proceeding was waning. She was evidently bored, and showed her indifference by turning her back upon the golden storehouse and wandering around the cavern.

Beckoning her torch-bearers to accompany her, she entered an opening in the wall at her left and proceeded farther into the recesses of the cave. A winding passage led downward, narrow and tortuous, scarcely wide enough for two to walk abreast. Possessed by some strange whim, the Queen pursued her way down this dark and narrow lane between the walls of rock, her pathway lighted only by the fitful gleam of the torches.

She had never been there before, nor had any of her maidens, and the latter followed her shaking with fear. At first, Arthur stood where she had so suddenly left him, uncertain what to do, since she had not invited him to go with her; but he finally concluded that it was his duty to follow after, even if at a little distance; and so, with a torch in one hand and his sword in the other, he walked slowly down the narrow passageway. He had gone but a few rods, when he was startled by a loud shriek as of deadly fear or sharp agony, and a moment later, hurrying forward, he witnessed a sight that caused the blood to curdle in his veins.

XXXVII.

The Duel Underground.

THE maidens were all hastening toward him, but Arthur looked beyond them and saw the Queen struggling in the grasp of a hideous monster. Holding his torch aloft and brushing the girls aside, as they met him and would have clung to him in their fright, he pushed ahead as rapidly as the nature of the path would allow, and soon was abreast the monster and his victim.

The term "monster" is used in speaking of this object that had seized the Queen, for no other could give an impression of its horrid aspect. It was unlike anything Arthur had ever seen, but seemed more to resemble a gorilla than a human being, for it had long, hairy arms, a low brow, small black eyes which sparkled like deep-set diamonds, and a huge mouth from which protruded two long fangs, while its complexion was blood red.

It flashed upon Arthur, at sight of this terrible being, that he must be the *diablo colorado*, or "red devil," of whom he had been warned at Monte Cristi. But, be it man or devil, he was resolved to rescue the Queen from the monster's clutches, and he took

no thought of the risk he ran in doing so, only having in mind the damsel's danger, and feeling that he would be willing to lay down his life in her defence.

There was no time to lose, for as the fiend heard him coming he tightened his grasp on the Queen's slender throat, and in a very short time she would have been choked to death. She lay there limp and senseless, a picture of beautiful helplessness, while above her the red devil grinned and glowered.

Arthur had no arms with him except the sword, the mate to which was now in the possession of the monster, who had seized it as the Queen let it fall from her hand, when he had darted out upon her from his hiding-place. As Arthur approached and made as if he would spring at the creature's throat, the latter interposed the body of his helpless prisoner, at the same time retreating slowly to the far end of the passageway, where he could set his back against the wall.

The danger of advancing was now increased by the fact that there were deep holes or natural wells on either side the path, which yawned black and apparently fathomless, as traps for the unwary intruder. Except where the dim light of the two smoking torches penetrated, all was inky blackness, and thus Arthur had to exercise caution, not only in approaching his enemy, but lest his torch should become extinguished. Then he was thankful that he had learned to fence with one hand, so that he could hold the

torch aloft, and at the same time keep his guard and make his thrusts. He lost no time in pressing to combat, for he knew that every minute the Queen remained in his grasp was taking her nearer and nearer to death.

Hitherto, the monster had held the torch which he had wrested from the Queen in the same hand that gripped her sword, the other being employed in crushing out her life. So he was at a disadvantage, which Arthur was not slow to appreciate, for seeing an opportunity to get in a thrust, he sprang forward and wounded him in the thigh. This made him relax his grip on his prey, and the Queen dropped to the ground, where she lay unconscious, while above and around her waged as fierce a battle as was ever fought by duellists in modern times.

Uttering a howl of rage and pain, the monster shifted the sword to his right hand, leaving the torch in his left, and crouched like a tiger awaiting the next move of his foe. He evidently knew little of sword-craft, but relied upon his superior size and strength to win the victory. Arthur, as has been said, was an accomplished swordsman, and he knew that if he once allowed the giant to get him within arm's length his chance for life was small. So he stood on guard, watching every movement of his opponent. The latter had the advantage of him in position, with his back against a wall and a broad space in front and on either side; while Arthur was standing right

between two chasm-like wells, scarce ten feet apart. To add to his anxiety, the apparently lifeless Queen lay where but a slight push would send her rolling into one or the other of the wells, where her fate would be surely sealed, even if she were still alive.

He wasted no time in useless speculation, but at once made up his mind as to the sort of play he would use. If he allowed the giant to charge, the mere weight of his huge body might send him to the ground and place him at his mercy. So he resolved to fight on the offensive from the first. That it was to be a fight to the death, he had no doubt, for there was no alternative. He felt no fear, however, and was only apprehensive as to the result for the Queen's and his brother's sake. For the Queen's, more immediately, since she was placed in double peril through her situation.

He advanced and feinted, and, as he expected, the giant rose and attempted to hew him down with a crushing blow. This blow he deftly parried, and then, before his opponent could recover, gave him a thrust in the shoulder that made him yell with pain.

The sword did not go so deeply as Arthur had intended, yet it was difficult to withdraw, and it flashed upon the young man that the giant was defended by chain armor. This proved to be so, and Arthur at once recognized the futility of dealing body blows, and devoted his attention to the monster's throat and arms. But he had to reach so far for his throat, and

the arms flew about so like the sails of a windmill, that it was no easy matter, after all. The monster's only thought seemed to be to crush his foe by tremendous blows, and it was all Arthur could do to ward them off. If his sword had been of a temper less fine than it was, — having been forged in the waters and polished with the sands of the Tagus, like all true Toledos, — it would have been hacked and dented long before the fight came to an end; but it stood the test and proved a friend indeed.

Through it all, Arthur kept the monster pinned against the wall, unable to advance, until one blow more crushing than the others felled him to the earth, and before he could rise, the giant was upon him. His sword slipped away in the darkness, and he felt that at last he had lost the game, for the hot breath of the monster was in his face, and his heavy body bore down upon him with crushing force. The giant was bleeding from a dozen wounds, and his strength was failing; but still he had enough left to keep his foe from rising. Hitherto, neither had uttered a word, but now that the *diablo colorado* had the boy at his mercy, he hissed into his ear, in Spanish: —

"Ha, you thought to escape Lelee; but know you, I am his master and his messenger! Now I shall kill you and take your head to the capital, where I shall get a great reward. And not only you, but your brother, who is already my prisoner, bound in

his hut, only waiting my return to be killed, like yourself. This girl, too, the one you tried to take from me, she shall first see you die, then shall go to join her ancestors whose treasure you came here to find. Speak, what say you?"

"Nothing," said Arthur, with an effort. "Kill me, and have done."

He really thought his end was nigh, helpless as he was in the grip of the giant; but still he was alert and wary. Suddenly his ear caught the sound of a sigh, and he knew the Queen was yet alive, and probably returning to consciousness. The monster heard it, too, and turned in the direction where she had lain; but she was not there, and in his astonishment he relaxed his hold on Arthur, who instantly threw him off and regained his feet.

"Oh, if I had my sword!" was his first thought, as he stood in the darkness, expecting the onslaught of his enemy. The torches lay smouldering on the cavern floor, and by the dim light they gave, the monster was seeking a vulnerable spot into which to plunge his sword and end Arthur's life. But while he halted an instant, the tide of battle turned in Arthur's favor, — or at least he was again given a living chance, — for he felt a hand clutch his arm, and a voice whispered in his ear: "Here am I, and here is your sword. Take it!"

The Queen had recovered, she had by chance found the sword, and with the inborn cunning in-

herited from her Indian ancestors, she had lain quiet until able to ascertain the respective positions of the combatants, when she crept to Arthur's side and pressed the sword into his hand.

What joy then thrilled him as he felt the trusty hilt, and how his pulses bounded now that he knew the Queen was alive!

He awaited the attack no longer, but with renewed vigor made at the enemy, dimly outlined as he was, just as he himself came down upon him with a two-handed blow. Arthur almost laughed aloud at the giant's clumsiness, for he now felt invincible, the blood leaped through his veins like quicksilver. He parried the blow, and then swung his sword around and took the giant right across the neck. He stumbled, threw out his hands in a vain attempt to clutch his foe, and then fell to earth with a tremendous crash, rolled over twice or thrice, and fell into one of the wells. The awed listeners heard him bounding from side to side, in his descent carrying with him loosened earth and rocks; then all was quiet and there came no sound from out the depth profound.

For a moment the conqueror stood as if petrified, silent, oppressed by a vague feeling of blood-guiltiness; but at last he sighed, and said softly to himself: "What else could I do? It was in defence of my life, and not only mine but the Queen's. Thank God, I saved her from a dreadful death!"

He felt a soft touch on his cheek, then the Queen's hand sought his own and pressed it to her lips. "Henceforth I am your servant," she whispered. "My life is yours, you saved it. My people, too, will always be your slaves!"

Arthur did not, of course, understand all her speech, but he inferred it from her actions, and he snatched his hand away — perhaps rather rudely, in his confusion — and ejaculated: —

"No, no, you can never be my servant, my slave. You have been good to me. I could not have done less. It was nothing. By killing the *diablo colorado* I have rendered a greater service to myself and my brother than to you. He was our deadly enemy, and came here to seek our blood!"

Then he realized how foolish it was to waste words upon one who could not understand him, and also how rude he had been in snatching his hand away; but the deed was done, and of a truth this was no time to stand upon ceremony. The words of the monster recurred to him then, and he felt a real fear in his heart at the thought of his brother, bound and helpless in the hut so far away. There was no time to lose, so he picked up one of the torches, blew its smouldering tip into a flame, extended his hand to the Queen, and gently led her toward the treasure chamber.

He was not surprised when he glanced back at her to find that she was weeping, nor that she trembled

so she could hardly stand; but there was nothing to do but to press on until the horrid passageway was left and a place of safety gained.

He still clung to the sword, as to the best friend he had on earth; but the other Toledo had gone down with the monster. If it had been left he would not have touched it, feeling that it had been defiled by contact with that horrible wretch, whose fetid breath he seemed to feel yet, hot upon his cheeks. The air was stifling, the blood from the gash in his forehead filled his eyes, and before the chamber was reached, he groped blindly like a man bereft of sight and staggered from weakness.

The Queen was not so overcome by fear and grief that she could not detect his condition, and when the path had widened so that she could walk by his side she pressed forward, just in time to catch him in her arms, as he reached the limit of his strength and fell. They had then almost gained the aperture giving access to the treasure chamber, and through this she dragged him, falling from exhaustion, as the sound of voices and gleam of lights proclaimed the coming of friends to the rescue.

XXXVIII.

A Treasure held in Trust.

WHEN Arthur opened his eyes, it was to find himself the centre of a sympathetic group composed of the Queen and her court, all the maidens having returned to the cavern as soon as they had been able to gather a rescue party; and now they seemed very anxious about the hero of the occasion. One was washing the blood from his face, another holding a towel, another chafing his hands, while the rest were mainly occupied in crowding about and making it nearly impossible for him to get a breath of fresh air — which was what he needed more than anything else in the world, just then.

It is needless to remark that he was provoked beyond measure to be caught in such a plight, and as soon as he could do so with good grace, he gently repulsed his lovely nurses, raised himself to a sitting posture, and then to his feet.

And it was just then, as he was looking wildly about, trying to collect his scattered senses, that there came into the treasure chamber another crowd of people, in their midst the very one who had occupied his thoughts almost exclusively during the past two days, — in other words, his brother.

It was a picturesque scene that met Hartley's gaze at that moment, and he, too, seemed at first rather bewildered, as well he might have been, this being his first glimpse of the cavern and its contents. Against the golden images as a background, rising tier above tier, and glittering heaps of dust and nuggets in the nooks and corners, there was massed a crowd of Indians, mostly females, nearly all young and comely, with his brother as a central figure. He was so taken aback that he omitted to note that Arthur's features were pallid and blood-streaked, and this omission may be excused, perhaps, owing to the dim light cast by the smoking torches.

"Why, Arthur, is that you?" he asked jauntily. "What is the meaning of all this, pray, — and tell me, where is the old Queen?"

The sound of Hartley's voice acted as a tonic at once, and Arthur pushed forward and grasped his brother's hand. "There isn't any *old* Queen, Hart, but the lady standing apart, with the golden girdle around her waist, is the princess, or the young Queen. We have had a little adventure in the cavern beyond, and she is greatly perturbed, as well as myself."

"Adventure? What was it? But wait, let me tell you mine. Do you know that the *diablo colorado* is around these parts, and came near making an end of me? You do, eh? Well, let me tell you, if it hadn't been for Esteban, I might not now be in the land of the living, for that *diablo colorado*

attacked me in the hut the night after you left, and left me bound to a post, saying he was going in search of you, and would then come back and attend to me. Think of it!"

"Dear me, Hart, I *have* thought of it, and of scarcely anything else, for some time past. But you needn't have any more fear on his account, for he is now lying at the bottom of a deep hole inside the cavern yonder."

"So? And how did he get there? But you needn't tell me, for that gash in your face means something, and then again there's blood all over your sword!"

"Yes, it's terrible, isn't it? But I couldn't help it, for he was carrying off the Queen, and when I made at him he fought, so it had to be one of us, you know."

"Help it, you silly boy! Of course you couldn't. And the world is well rid of a villain! Well, I only hope he's the last of Lelee's emissaries, for this fighting them off, one after another, is getting to be tiresome. But I guess he is, though, for I've received some information since you left me, that tells me — but no matter about that now — all in good time. Don't you think I might be presented to the Queen?"

"Why, to be sure. But you must remember that she *is* a queen, by right of birth, even if she hasn't much of a country and is an Indian born. And, look! There is the treasure we've been seeking so

long. It is hers, — all of it, — that is, it was; but she insists that we shall share it with her, or take it all."

"She does? She's generous. But of course we won't. We didn't come here on a plundering expedition!"

"No, indeed. But we must give her credit for the good intention. Come now, and be presented."

Hartley could hardly take his gaze off the golden images, despite the bevy of beauties standing about and regarding him with wide-open, wondering eyes. But he was decent enough to make his best bow to the Queen, who was gracious enough to welcome him most cordially; and so the presentation passed off very well, leaving an impression mutually agreeable.

Then they all filed out of the cavern, finding in the great hall another crowd of anxious Indians, held in check only by the persuasions of Esteban from going to the aid of their beloved Queen. He saluted Arthur with respect, looking significantly at his bloody sword, as he said: —

"Señor, master mine, by the killing of *el diablo colorado*, and by saving the life of our Queen, you have made slaves of us all!"

"And you, Esteban," replied Arthur, warmly returning the pressure of his hand, "have made me your debtor forever by saving the life of my brother. When you left me so abruptly, two days ago, I felt some distrust of your intentions; but now, you will forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," rejoined Esteban, with feeling. "Naturally you had doubts of me, having lied to you as I did, having played upon your credulity with my preposterous tales."

"He means about his being several hundred years old, I guess," said Hartley to his brother; "but we won't mind a little thing like that."

"No, indeed," answered Arthur, with a smile. "We can overlook a great deal on account of what he has really done for us, and I certainly hope he will live as long as he says he has lived already."

"My sentiments, too," rejoined Hartley. "He's a white man, whatever his complexion is, and I'll stand by him to the end of time."

"But how did that old *diablo colorado* get in here, Esteban? Guess your trap in the cave isn't rat-proof, after all, eh?"

"Didn't get in that way," said Esteban, shrugging his shoulders. "He swung down over cliffs by a long line. Made big rope out of wild vines many hundred feet long. Ah, he very cunning, that old *diablo colorado*. He watch for me many years. But I'm glad he's dead, for he more cunning than the President, his master."

They escorted the Queen and her maidens to their dwellings, and then sought out the kiosk, where, once the three were seated, Hartley disburdened himself of his secret. "Arthur, I can't keep it any longer," he said, drawing from his pocket a long envelope

with a big seal on it. "Do you recognize that writing and that seal?"

"Certainly," replied Arthur. "That's from the Consul. How did you get it?"

"That's what I'm going to tell you, if you'll give me time. Don't you suppose he could have brought it himself?"

"Oh, did he? Is he here? I wish I could see him. But no, if he were here he wouldn't have written a letter, of course."

"You are right. He didn't, and he isn't. And you might try till you were a million years old, and I don't believe you could guess how that letter came into my — I mean our — possession. I say 'our,' because it was Esteban who spied it coming, and if it hadn't been for him, we might never have received it."

"Well, tell me how it got here."

"I'm going to, right now. You see, Esteban came to the hut and found me tied to the post, and nearly dead from hunger and fatigue, after having been left there by that old rascal you disposed of, thank heaven! — in the cavern."

"Poor boy, how you must have suffered!"

"Well, yes, it wasn't very nice, I assure you; but no matter now. I'll confess that I was more frightened than hurt, for he's well named. He left his mark on me, too. See!" Hartley drew back his sleeve and showed two livid semicircles on his arm.

"That's where he bit me. I only hope his bite isn't poisonous; but Esteban has washed the wound with some antiseptic preparation, so I think it won't bother me any more. But don't worry," he added, seeing the look of concern on his brother's face. "Let that go. Now we'll get right down to business. After Esteban had cut me loose and given me something to revive my spirits, he took me out under the silk-cotton tree and set me down to rest by the side of the brook. As he was going back to the house, he happened to look up in the sky and saw something he took for an immense eagle. But it wasn't, it was — can't you guess?"

"Not a balloon?"

"Exactly, a small balloon. But by the time I had focussed my optics on it, the thing had sailed almost out of sight and soon disappeared over the mountains. Esteban was awfully worried, for he thought it must be some sort of a celestial visitor, — never having seen a balloon before, — but I explained to him what it was and he calmed down, though I believe he was truly frightened for a few minutes, weren't you, Esteban?"

"True, I was," acknowledged the Moor. "Never saw thing like that before. White men invent many things since I came to this island."

"Well, I sat and pondered over the coming of that balloon until I came to the conclusion that it had been sent here for a purpose. And if that were the

case, another might follow in its wake, the first having been sent to attract our attention. Then I reasoned it out that the people in the interior of Santo Domingo weren't given to that sort of thing, — most of them, in fact, like Esteban, never having seen a balloon; and again, I reckoned that about the only man with wit enough to think of reaching us by balloon would be our friend the Consul. And, sure enough, after Esteban had been watching the sky, by my orders, for two hours or more, he announced another balloon coming right in the track of the first. That's easy to understand, you know, for the trade winds blow only in one direction at certain seasons, and if two balloons were set free at a certain point they would naturally follow the same course."

"Yes," interposed Arthur, "that is plain enough. But how did you manage to stop either of them?"

"Oh, wait. You don't know that I did, do you? But I did, though, and this is how. I was feeling better by that time, and with Esteban's help I walked out to the knoll behind the hut, taking my rifle with me. Now do you understand? Oh, you do? Well, when the balloon had sailed within about two hundred yards of me, and was right overhead, I fired and split the gas bag into ribbons! That's all. As it came sailing down, out tumbled a package, and in the package was this envelope enclosing a letter. And here's the letter," said Hartley, handing it to Arthur, who at once proceeded to read aloud the following document: —

"SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS, SANTO DOMINGO.
[Date suppressed.]

"MY DEAR BOYS: Having heard nothing from you since we parted at Cristi, I took a trip up this way in search of information. Found Don Alessandro and his family, with whom you stopped awhile, and they are, let me say in passing, almost as much distressed as I am at your long silence. Nobody knows where you are, but the general opinion is that the earth has opened and swallowed you up. However, since you were at last accounts headed for the cordillera, I am taking the only chance of reaching you by despatching a couple of small balloons in that direction as a sort of forlorn hope. Heaven grant one of them at least may find you.

"Assuming this letter (written in duplicate and sent by the two balloons) may reach you, let me tell you the news. It is good or bad, according to whomsoever it may concern. At all events, it concerns you both. The President is dead! Yes, he is now beyond all reach of human arm, to punish or to save; for on the 25th of last month he was assassinated at Moca, as he was endeavoring to suppress a rebellion of the serranos, and his remains are interred in the cathedral here at Santiago. At last he has met his deserts. Whether he deserved his fate or not, I dare not venture to say in this letter, not knowing into whose hands it may fall. But you need now have no fear of him nor of his emissaries — except one,

and he is the most to be dreaded of all. He is called the *diablo colorado*. Should you escape him, all will be well. Should you meet him, — and you cannot fail to know him by his ferocious appearance and blood-red skin, — attack him at once, and do not give him quarter. He is a murderer and a sorcerer; a willing tool he has been of Lelee's, and doubtless he has been advised to look for you. This is all — only to warn you. If you find the treasure, save me some trinket or other. If you have opportunity to reply to this, make all haste to do so, and believe me,

"Ever your well-wisher,

"HENRY GARLAND.

"P.S. By the way, Don Alessandro instructs me to say that he has a new poem 'on the stocks,' which he knows will fetch you back (to read), if nothing else will, and Señorita Tomasina bids ask if you have yet met a foe worthy of that sword. Miss Rita adds that she and her sisters are crying their eyes out, and that she thinks you are 'awfully mean' to go off and stay so long without a word for them. You may know best; but that is also the opinion of

"Yours sincerely,

"H. G."

"So Lelee is dead?" said Arthur, drawing a long breath of relief.

"Must be," said Hartley, "unless he's come to life since that letter was written. But really, I can hardly

believe it, for he seemed of the kind that never would die, but go on forever committing his atrocious deeds."

"Well, since he's dead," rejoined Arthur, "we'll say nothing against him; only no other fate could have been expected for him than just what he received. As you say, it seems incredible, and if the Consul hadn't added that he was buried there in Santiago, I should feel sure the news was not reliable."

"Well, that lets us out of our dilemma," said Hartley. "If we stay here any longer, it will not be because we are afraid to go on account of Lelee's myrmidons on our trail."

Arthur looked earnestly in his brother's eyes, then dropped his gaze as he said, hardly above a whisper, "Do you want to go?"

"No, I don't. This sort of life they lead here will just suit me, I think; and besides, Esteban says the island will now be in the throes of revolution for months, at least, and it would be just as dangerous for us as if Lelee himself were still in power. That is, the people are now fighting amongst themselves, and if one side doesn't kill us as rebels, the other will as supporters of the government. So there we are. 'Heads, they win; tails, we lose,' whichever side we take. I say stay! What do you say?"

"I?" exclaimed Arthur, joyfully. "Oh, stay, of course. It seems to me our duty lies right here, — for a few months, perhaps years, anyway. The little I

have seen of these people has convinced me of their goodness, their innocence, — and not only that, but their helplessness. It isn't likely they can remain here much longer without being discovered, and whatever form of government this island may have in the future, there is little doubt that if it could get hold of their treasure and their lands it would keep them both. As to the treasure, I propose that we hold it in trust, for the benefit of Queen Anacaona and her people. First, after there is a settled government, we will buy all the land comprised in the two valleys, the title to be vested in the Queen, and then take another portion of the treasure for the enlightenment of her subjects; give them schools, books, education, teach them trades, and raise them generally in the scale of civilization."

"My sentiments, exactly. I'm with you heart and hand. But how about the Consul and our other friends? We owe them something, too."

"Yes, I have thought of that; and with Esteban's help I feel sure we can get a message out to them in time. Now, Esteban, as you have heard all we have said, go tell the Queen, and ask her if she is willing we may stay here on those terms."

Esteban departed, without a word. He soon returned, but not alone, for with him came the Queen, walking slowly, deep in thought. At the door of the kiosk she held an animated conversation in Arawak with the Moor, the purport of which he translated for

her guests, while the Queen regarded them intently, her beautiful face alight with joy and satisfaction.

"It is my pleasure that you stay always, so long as you are content, for my life you have saved. I and my people regard you as sent by Heaven, to show us how to live the best we can."





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